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THE GOSPEL OF THE SOVEREIGNTY

THE GOSPEL OF THE SOVEREIGNTY

AND OTHER SERMONS

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BY THE REV.

J. D. JONES, D.D.

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I

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

"*The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.*"—PSALM xcvii. 1.
"*The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble.*"—PSALM xcix. 1.

THE great need of our day is not the discovery of new truths, but the vitalization of old ones, and the man of the hour would be he who could breathe new life into certain simple, elementary truths which have been in the Church's possession throughout all the years of her continuance. We have quite enough articles in our creeds, what we want is sincerely to believe in them. For every truth honestly believed in becomes an energy in our life. Every genuine belief is a force. But many of the beliefs we profess to hold are as void of life and power as the dry bones in the valley of the prophet's vision. Some of the primary truths of our Christian faith would come upon us with all the surprise of new revelations if we once really felt their power.

And among the truths which need to be vitalized and restored to potency and influence amongst us is the great and blessed truth of the Sovereignty of God. It is a primal article in our creeds; but to a large extent it has passed out of the category of effective beliefs. It has ceased to be an energizing faith. It is not to-day a force in our lives. And there is nothing which, in the interests of a deep, virile, serious religion, we need more than to know the power of the truth that "the Lord reigneth"; that our God

is not a dead God, not an inert God, not an absentee God; but a living God, a Sovereign God, a present God, a working God, actively engaged in directing, overruling, shaping the affairs of nations and of men.

Calvinism.

Now there was a time when the Sovereignty of God was a great, influential and regnant truth; when men had a subduing, and almost overwhelming sense of the ruling and shaping will of God. Those were the days when Calvinism was at the height of its influence. Happily we have arrived now at the time when the fires of the old controversy between Calvinists and Arminians have died down, and there is not a spark left in the ashes, and therefore, without the risk of misunderstanding, we can recognize and appreciate the truths for which each party stood. And that was the vital truth for which Calvinism stood, the central doctrine of the Calvinistic System—the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. Now that there was much that was stern and forbidding and even repulsive in the Calvinistic creed, I grant; and that some of its repulsiveness was due to the pitiless and remorseless logic with which the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God was pushed to its extremest consequences—so that man became a helpless puppet, and God an irresponsible tyrant, saving some and damning others of His mere good pleasure—I also freely admit. But when we speak with contempt and scorn of Calvinism and the Calvinists we show ourselves both ignorant and foolish: ignorant, because, whatever else Calvinism may be, it is a mighty and reasoned system, it is a sublime creation of the human intellect, and the world has perhaps never produced

two subtler thinkers, two men who have exercised a greater mastery over the human mind, than those two great exponents of the Calvinistic creed—John Calvin of Geneva, and Jonathan Edwards of America; and we show ourselves foolish, because this Calvinism, of which we speak so contemptuously, produced some of the greatest and most heroic men the world has ever known. Merely to mention the fact that Calvinism gave to the world William the Silent of Holland, Admiral Coligny of France, John Knox of Scotland, Oliver Cromwell of England, ought to make gibes at Calvinism impossible, and ought to make us realize that the world owes to it a debt it can never repay. We may repudiate, and we do, the extreme Calvinistic dogmas; but let us frankly acknowledge what was great and noble in it. It was an iron creed, but it made iron men, so that the world never knew braver or stronger men than Calvinism bred. This humbling creed, which laid a man prostrate before his Maker, made holy men, so that the world numbers among its choicest saints John Bunyan and Richard Baxter, and Samuel Rutherford and Jonathan Edwards. This ennobling creed, which made a man feel he was the instrument and messenger of Almighty God, made mighty men, men who would neither bend nor bow, who feared none but God, and who with splendid courage crashed against all sorts of tyrannies and wrongs. Listen to what J. A. Froude (not a prejudiced witness) says in one of the volumes of his Short Essays about the Calvinists: "They attracted to themselves every man in Europe that 'hated a lie.' They were crushed down, but they rose again. They were splintered and torn, but no power could melt or bend them. They abhorred, as no body of men ever more abhorred, all conscious mendacity, all impurity,

all moral wrong of every kind so far as they could recognize it. Whatever exists at this moment in England and Scotland of conscientious fear of wrong-doing is the remnant of the convictions which were branded by the Calvinists into the people's hearts." And though there may be a little of Froude's rhetoric in that glowing passage, substantially this witness is true.

We are fond, on such occasions as these,[1] of boasting of our descent from the Puritans, and surely it is a lineage upon which we may well pride ourselves. On the whole, the Puritan is the noblest and most heroic figure upon the pages of our English history. It was the Puritan who broke the back of tyranny in the State; it was the Puritan who preserved personal and vital religion. And it was Calvinism in turn that made the Puritan. The Puritan's fundamental belief was his belief in the Sovereignty of God. He had an overmastering sense of the presence of God; he regarded himself as but the instrument of the Divine will. It was that sense of God as Sovereign that produced that humbling consciousness of sin which you find, for instance, in John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*. It was that same sense of God as Sovereign that gave the Puritan his resistless strength. "Deus vult, Deus vult," cried the crowd of princes and barons and knights who listened to Urban's fiery advocacy of a crusade to rescue the tomb of Christ from the hands of the infidel; "God wills it, God wills it." "Deus vult" might have been taken by the Puritans for their motto, "God wills it, God wills it." For that is exactly how they regarded themselves—as agents of the Divine purposes, instru-

[1] Preached as the official sermon of the National Free Church Congress at Norwich.

ments of the Divine will. And there you have the secret of their pertinacity, their strength, their indomitable courage. The man who believes he is *sent,* that he has a mission, that back of his own will is the Divine and Almighty will, is always a terrible person. What wonder that Rupert's cavaliers were scattered, like chaff before the wind, before the terrific onset of Cromwell's Ironsides? What chance had men whose inspiration was loyalty to a prince when brought into collision with men who believed themselves to be the instruments of the Divine will? What wonder that those gallant soldiers who sang their gay songs as they rode into battle were as stubble to the swords of men who shouted as they swept to the charge, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon"?

It was in virtue of this central faith of his in the Sovereignty of God that the Puritan lived his strenuous life and accomplished his mighty work. He lived as ever "in the great Taskmaster's eye." His one and absorbing aim was to bring himself into line with that holy and perfect and acceptable will of God which he saw working out its purposes in the world. Calvinism is almost a reproach and a byword and a hissing amongst us in these days. Yet we are faced by the fact that never did this land of ours possess men so great and strong and God-fearing as she did when this iron creed was at the height of its influence. The day of the supremacy of this doctrine of the Sovereignty of God was also the day when English piety came to its consummate flower. And I am profoundly convinced that if we want to recover that deep, serious, masculine religion which characterized the Puritan, we must recover this doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, and restore it to its proper place of influence and power.

I do not suggest that we should commit ourselves to all that the Calvinists believed about Election and Reprobation and the Divine Decrees. In all these things they were the victims of their own logic, and they spoke of God the things that were not right. But life will never be great and dignified, and religion will never be deep and serious until we realize God as they did—as the living, present, Sovereign God; until we are subdued and possessed and mastered by the sense of His presence; until we regard ourselves as the agents of His purposes and the instruments of His will.

We are living in a rather limp and flaccid time. The intellectual temper of our day is that of a genial humanitarianism. Our manners are soft, our beliefs are invertebrate. And the Church's condition corresponds somewhat to the condition of the age. For years now we have been bemoaning our ineffectiveness and lack of power. The fact is, a genial humanitarianism will never carry a Church to victory. What we need is a new vision of God—the Mighty God. Men have called the Puritan religion "the Hard Church." But is it not time, as Professor Peabody says, to face the perils of "the Soft Church"? That is our peril to-day—the peril of the Soft Church. We want a breath of the Puritan's bracing faith. For Churches and for men it remains eternally true—"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

The texts I read out at the beginning of my sermon are from the Royal Psalms. The main subject of these Psalms from Psalm XCIII onwards is the Sovereignty of God. And I have chosen my two texts just because they set forth a double result that will follow upon a realization of the truth of the Sovereignty of God.

The Sovereignty and Godly Awe.

First of all, we shall gain a *new sense of awe*. "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble." There was a note of seriousness and solemnity about the religion of the Puritan that is all too often lacking in the religion of to-day. It was born of his sense of the Sovereignty of God. It has passed away because, to a large extent, that doctrine has lost its hold upon us.

The characteristic of the teaching about God of the past five-and-twenty or perhaps fifty years has been the stress and emphasis laid upon the Fatherhood. We have emphasized what is tender and gracious and benignant in the Divine character. This has been partly, no doubt, in the nature of a reaction against the harsher views that previously prevailed. Now, lest there should be any misunderstanding, let me at once say that I too rejoice in the Fatherhood of God: I delight to proclaim God's tenderness and compassion and infinite love. But, as so often happens, in our reaction from one extreme we have swung right across to the other. If our fathers emphasized God's "awful purity" at the expense of His love, we have emphasized His love at the expense of His "awful purity." We delight in these days to say, "Gentle, gentle, gentle, is the God and Father"; we have almost forgotten that what cherubim and seraphim, with veiled faces, continually do cry is, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." In our absorption in the thought of God as Father, we have almost lost sight of the fact that He is the Holy Sovereign, ruling the world in righteousness. And the result has been that to a large extent we have lost the sense of *religious awe*, of *reverence* and of *godly fear*. There is a verse in a

hymn in our Congregational Hymnal in which the writer says—

> "Oh, how I fear Thee, living God,
> With deepest, tenderest fears;
> And worship Thee with trembling hope,
> And penitential tears."

That verse, I have often thought, is almost foreign to our modern religious experience. We do not "fear" God. We do not "tremble" in His presence. We do not worship Him with "penitential tears." We have lost our sense of God's Holy Sovereignty, and the awe has passed out of our religion. God has become to many of us an easy-going, good-natured, indulgent parent who can be coaxed and wheedled and cajoled by His children, and who can deny them nothing—*le bon Dieu* of the Frenchman. We have become "familiar" with God; we are on "easy terms" with Him; we speak to Him and about Him as we would to and about our next-door neighbour. We scarcely know what it means to worship God acceptably "with reverence and godly awe." And with our shallow and emasculated ideas of God we get a shallowness and superficiality and flippancy in our religious life. The seriousness and the solemnity have gone out of it. There is no depth of earth. To make our religious life deep and strong we need to recover that lost sense of awe. We need to be taught afresh the fear of the Lord. And to recover that lost sense of awe, to create within us the feeling of reverence, we need a new vision of God as the Holy Sovereign. "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble."

If you will look at the Psalm from which this text is taken you will notice that it is divided into three stanzas, and the last line in each stanza supplies the reason why the thought of the Sovereignty of God should

fill us with holy fear. "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble." Why? "Holy is He," answers the first stanza. "Holy is He," answers the second stanza. "For the Lord our God is holy," answers the third stanza. Put the two statements together, "The Lord reigneth . . . the Lord our God is holy," and what do you get? You get *holiness upon the throne.* We have only to realize that God is the Holy Sovereign, and the awe is bound to come back. "The Lord reigneth. Holy is He. Let the people tremble." The Lord reigneth, a Holy God is on the throne, *therefore let us fear.* To believe that an Almighty God is on the throne, working out His own holy and perfect and acceptable will, maintaining and asserting the eternal law of righteousness—is there not enough in that to fill the hearts of sinful men with "godly fear"? Is there not enough in that to make us "tremble"? The Puritan's religion was a serious religion. He was *afraid* of God—afraid of Him in a worthy sense. He conceived of God as with him and about him always, and he was afraid of sinning against His holiness. And is there not enough in the mere realization of the fact that a Holy God sits upon the throne, a God who is actively and unceasingly asserting His holiness—is there not enough in that one fact to make us men and women, who are so prone to sin, serious and fearful? We are constantly deploring our lack of the sense of sin. Is that due to the fact that we have obscured God's holiness? Sometimes I wonder whether the very emphasis we have laid on the tenderness and gentleness and patience of God's fatherly love has made it easy for men to sin. We have made God's forgiveness so cheap that sin has come to appear a light and trivial matter. If that is so, let us this day remind ourselves of the holiness of God;

let us lift up our eyes to the shining peaks of the "awful purity." Let us remind ourselves that this Holy God is on the throne—that He is on the throne to maintain purity and righteousness. The will that rules is a Holy Will. The power that governs is a Holy Power. All who sin bring themselves into collision with the Sovereign Will and Power of the Universe. Wherefore our Lord said, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust." "The Lord reigneth. Holy is He. Let the people tremble."

The Sovereignty and Holy Confidence.

But if, on the one hand, the realization that a Holy God is Sovereign ought to fill us sinful men and women with awe and godly fear, that same realization of God as Sovereign ought to fill those of us who love goodness and long for the triumph of Christ with a *happy confidence*. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice." "God's in His heaven," sang Pippa as she passed along the streets of Asolo, "all's right with the world." "In His heaven," that is, not as being absent from the earth, but as being in the place of supreme power and dominion. Anybody who believes that, who believes in the Sovereignty of God, in God's actual rule and government, can add in happy trust, "All's right with the world."

"The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice." Here is the real ground of our confidence in the coming of a better day—"The Lord reigneth." There are many things in the condition of modern society to depress and sadden us. The touching faith men had in the natural and inevitable "progress" of the race has

received many a shattering blow. Society seems to be turning back towards barbarism rather than away from it. The one thing that will keep our faith in the coming of the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness undimmed is to believe in the Sovereignty of God. The destinies of the world are not, for instance, at the mercy of fleets and armies—*the Lord reigneth.* We want a new grip on this mighty fact, for the whole world seems to be subscribing to the atheism of force and fear. Nations seek their safety in a multiplication of guns and battleships. Here in England we are spending more on munitions of war than we have ever done in our history. But it is not armies and alliances that settle the destinies of people. "The Lord reigneth." It is God who decides the fates of nations. He bringeth low and raiseth up, and His power none can usurp. And in that thought, let us be glad. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice."

For to believe in the Sovereignty, the active Sovereignty of God, is to believe in the strength and supremacy of righteousness. The man who looks out on the world and who can only see Kings and Emperors, and scheming politicians, and armies and fleets all ready at the first signal to deal out death and destruction may well fall into distraction and something like despair. But the man who believes in and realizes the Sovereignty of God can be happy and confident. When the Northern States of America braced themselves up for that gigantic struggle on behalf of the freedom of the slave, there were plenty of people—and amongst them many Englishmen—to prophesy defeat. But there were some men, like Ward Beecher, and Whittier and Lowell, and the great Lincoln himself, who contemplated the issue with confidence, because they believed they were on

God's side, and that God would not belie His own character by permitting the triumph of iniquity and wrong. But, at first, it seemed as if the prophecies of those who foretold defeat were all going to come true. Things went badly for the North, and after one fierce engagement in which victory rested with the South, the hearts of the bravest failed them. It happened that a meeting was being held in Washington at the time the news of the defeat arrived. Frederick Douglas, the slave orator, was speaking. The news was brought to the platform, and when he heard it, Frederick Douglas gave way to despair and burst into tears. The news passed from seat to seat through the hall, and as they heard it, the hearts of the people stood still with fear. But there was one old negro woman sitting away in a back gallery whom temporary defeat could not dishearten, and when she saw the meeting falling into something like a panic, and even Douglas in despair, she cried out with a shade of reproach in her tone, "Frederick Douglas, God is not dead." It was a simple word, but it brought the courage back to the hearts of all, because it reminded them of Him in whose hand the destinies of nations are, and by whom Kings rule and princes decree justice. The Northern cause was a righteous cause; the event in time showed that "God was not dead." "God is not dead," that is the truth we need for our good hope to realize to-day. He is not dead and He has not abdicated His throne. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice." To know that God rules, to realize His Sovereignty, is to be delivered from fears and despairs. His ways often transcend our feeble range of sight; clouds and thick darkness are often round about Him, but to know that God rules is to know, spite of all anarchism and militarism, that the

kingdoms shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers. The Lord reigneth, and He shall make righteousness to go forth as the light, and justice as the noonday."

"The Lord reigneth," this is the ground of our confidence in the *triumph of the Church*. The Church has not, of late years, been in a triumphant frame of mind. She has been depressed, nervous, harassed, anxious. She has talked continually about "reaction" and "arrest." She has been conscious of strained resources and inadequate powers. My brethren, what we want for a recovery of our courage and confidence is the recovery of our faith in the Sovereignty of God. There is a sentence in Dr. Paterson's book on the *Rule of Faith* which I commend to the serious consideration of my brethren. Here it is. "The value of a religion depends on the truth and sufficiency of its idea of God." Not only on *the truth* of it, you notice, but on the *sufficiency* of it as well. If we start with a little God, we shall have a little peddling religion, utterly insufficient to meet the better needs and wants of man. For the idea of God is the ground plan in religion. If the ground plan is cramped and meagre, the building erected upon it is bound to be cramped and meagre too. You cannot build a bigger building than your base will safely carry. On a narrow base a big building would simply topple over. And in exactly the same way, you can never build a big religion upon a little God. A great religion demands a great God for its starting-point. Now, whatever else our Christian Gospel claims to be, it claims to be a *great* religion. It claims the world for its province, and it preaches a salvation that reaches down to the last and the least. But to make this Christian religion of ours, with its

world-wide redemption, with its universal salvation even credible, we need a mighty conception of God. If we are to believe that this faith of ours can save everybody, if we are to believe that it will win its way to the ends of the earth, we must start with a great idea of God. And perhaps that is what we need for a revival of our faith and courage—an enlarged conception of God. Our doubts and timidities and despairs arise from the fact that we have made Him altogether like ourselves. If that were true, we might well despair. For no magnified and glorified man is equal to the great salvation of which our Gospel speaks. But our God is a great God, and a great King above all gods. The Lord reigneth—that is our confidence.

And it is a vision of the Sovereign Lord we need. The triumph of the Church does not depend upon us, but upon Him. It is He—the mighty God—who has said, "Ask of Me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." It is He who has said, "I will yet set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." And hath God, the Almighty God, said, and shall He not do it, or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? We have lingered perhaps too long among the gentlenesses of God; we need to-day the bracing vision of His majesty and power. We have, perhaps, dwelt overmuch on the meek and lowly Jesus; the vision we need to see to-day is that of the glorified Christ, with His sword upon His thigh, marching on prosperously because of truth and righteousness, the Mighty to save. The vision of the Throned Lord is the antidote to fear. Do you remember that antithesis at the close of St. Mark's Gospel? "Then the Lord was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went . . . everywhere." The

Lord on the throne—the servants out in the field. The Lord in the place of power—the disciples flinging themselves with resistless dash and courage upon all the strongholds of heathenism. And the vision of the King produces exactly the same effect to-day. "Do you expect to convert China?" asked the captain of the ship in which Robert Morison sailed. "No," replied that indomitable missionary, going out alone to claim China for Christ, "but I expect God will." That is the secret of courage! The Lord reigneth; let His Church rejoice! To realize that God is King will change our Misereres into Te Deums and our sobs into shouts of triumph. A new faith in the Sovereignty of God will send us back to our tasks with the assurance born of a mighty faith. What though obstacles are great and enemies are many? Greater is He that is with us than all that are against us. The Lord reigneth, and He will not fail nor be discouraged till He has brought forth justice unto victory.

And I finish by saying this personal word. "The Lord reigneth,"—it is just the realization that God is Sovereign that will bring us *calm and peace amid the varied experiences of our individual lives.* Horace Bushnell has a sermon in one of his volumes on the text, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me," and to the sermon he gives the title, "Every man's life, a plan of God." I know the difficulty there is in reconciling this with our faith in human freedom. I am not going to try to solve the antinomy. I believe that man is free, and I also humbly believe that every man's life is a plan of God. God compasses our path and lying down; He is acquainted with all our ways: He orders our steps. The temptations, the trials, the joys, the sorrows of our lives—they are all of His ordaining. The niche we occupy, the sphere

we try to fill, the work we seek to do—they are all of His appointment. "The Lord reigneth." And in this fact let us rejoice. For this Lord who reigns—who girds us though we do not know it—is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have said that He is the Holy God. But He is also the loving God. "Holy Father," that is His full and perfect name. This is one of the commonplaces of our religion, but it is one of those commonplaces that sorely needs to be revitalized. When we come to account for our trials and difficulties and hardships—if we believe in a living God at all—we come ultimately to this: they happen to us because they are God's will for us. But that will is a loving will, a perfect will. Once we realize that, we shall arrive at Paul's sunny faith that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Our lives get broken and harassed just because we forget that it is the Lord who reigns. "Be still," says one of the Psalmists, "and know that I am God." Once we realize that He who gave His Son for us all is on the throne, we shall find it easier, amid life's manifold perplexities, to be still. Life is not easy for any one of us. It brings its burdens, its cares, its sorrows. Perhaps I am speaking to some burdened and sorrowful hearts. You have been labouring in a hard place; you have had grievous disappointment to bear; you have had sickness in the home; you have perhaps seen a dear one go down to the gates of death. What have I, what has any one to say in the face of these things? Just this: "The Lord reigneth." And that Lord gave His Son. Holy Love is Sovereign. Love girds us though we may not know it. To believe that is to possess that deep and central calm which neither sorrow nor pain nor trouble

nor even death can disturb, for we shall know that underneath us are the everlasting arms. We shall be able to make those familiar lines of Whittier our own and say—

"I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

"The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice."

II

THE ZEAL OF THE LORD

"*The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.*"—ISAIAH ix. 8.

WHEN theologians, in their attempts to give some account of the nature of God, start not from the revelation of Him given in Christ, but from abstract philosophical notions, they land themselves and those who listen to them in all sorts of calamitous errors. That is exactly what the theologians of the early Christian centuries did. They were under the spell of Greek philosophy, and instead of trying to interpret God in terms of Christ, they interpreted Him in terms of the Absolute of philosophy, the ultimate Reality which lies behind phenomena. And dominated by this thought of God as the Absolute Being, they practically emptied God of all His Christian attributes. God, as Professor Adams Brown puts it, was conceived as the one spiritual substance—far above human reach or comprehension—infinite, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible. Every attribute that brought God near to man was either denied or emptied of its meaning. Amongst other things it was denied that God could feel or suffer. To assert that God could feel and suffer was, to them, equivalent to denying God's eternal perfection. And so they erected the impassibility of God into a doctrine. They did it all, as they thought, to safeguard the honour and majesty and spirituality of God, but in

the process they managed to hide from the eyes of men the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and reduced God from a living God to a mere logical formula.

One of the greatest gains of these modern times is this—we have, to a large extent, emancipated ourselves from the tyranny of these abstract philosophical ideas. In our efforts to understand the nature of God, we do not nowadays start with Plato or Aristotle, we start with Christ. We believe as the Greek thinkers did, that God is the Absolute; we believe that He is the ultimate Reality, the final Cause of everything that is, but we do not start with an *a priori* conception of the Absolute, and allow that to whittle away the revelation of God given to us in Christ; but we start with Christ, and use what He has revealed to us of God to give meaning and content to our conception of the Absolute. The Absolute, the ultimate Reality, is to us not a mere string of abstract and negative terms. He is not the infinite, immutable, incomprehensible, impassible Being: He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The change of approach has resulted not only in a change of emphasis, it has resulted in the definite repudiation and rejection of certain attributes which were supposed to be essential to the idea of God's perfection—the doctrine of *the impassibility of God*, for example. Celsus, the greatest of Pagan critics of Christianity, had sneered at the Christians because they worshipped a crucified God. That God could suffer in that way was unworthy of a God and incredible. Many great theologians practically agreed with the critic. They asserted that God in His eternal perfection was beyond the reach of suffering and pain.

They did this, as I have said, with the idea of maintaining God's honour. What they really did was to de-personalize God and to put Him clean out of touch with men. This old idea of the impassible God is gone, with our return to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our God is no unfeeling, unheeding, impassive Deity. Our God is a Living God. Our God is a Personal God. Our God is Heart, as well as Will and Force. Our God knows and feels and sympathizes. Those stone deities of Egypt, gazing out across the desert sands with unblinking eyes, knowing no change, making no sign through the centuries, deaf, dumb, heedless—they might do for representations of the Absolute, but they are no emblems of our God. Our God is not deaf nor dumb nor stony. He does not live in some eternal calm untroubled by the needs and wants of men and the woes and miseries of the world. Our God is a Heart. Our God feels. The truth is written across the face of the whole Bible; it shines forth gloriously in the face of Jesus Christ. God is merciful; God is compassionate; God is angry; God knows joy; God knows pain. And if the revelation of Christ means anything, if in any real sense God was in Christ, then it is true of Almighty God to say, "He is a God of sorrows and acquainted with grief." God is not a bundle of abstract attributes; He is a living and personal God; He has the qualities of personality. "O heart I made, a heart beats here."

Now amongst the many qualities of God's nature there is the quality of *zeal*. It is perhaps a quality we do not often associate with God. We often speak of the love of God, and the pity of God, and the mercy of God, and even of the wrath of God, but not often of the zeal of God. And yet zeal is a quality

in God. It is here attributed to God by the prophet. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." In another place he talks about God clothing Himself with zeal as with a cloak. It was exemplified in Jesus, who was God manifest in the flesh. The people who watched Him were almost as much struck by His flaming enthusiasm as they were by His measureless compassion. That was the prophetic word of which they were reminded as they watched our Lord's tireless energy and enthusiasm in the work of the kingdom—"The zeal of Thine House hath eaten me up." God is a zealous God—that is the picture of God given to us in this old Book. "The zeal of the Lord!" The Hebrew word thus translated is derived from a root which means "to glow"; the Greek word translated "zeal" in the New Testament comes from a root which means "to boil." The "glow" of the fire, the restless energy of boiling water, they symbolize a certain quality in God. The Biblical idea of God is about as far removed as it can be from the philosophical conception of a Deity impassive and impassible, dwelling apart in eternal calm. It is not only far removed from it, it contradicts and denies it. God is like the glowing fire, God is like the restless boiling water. There is intensity, passion, ardour, zeal in God. And the prophet in my text finds great comfort in the thought of the "zeal" of God.

You remember the glowing passage from which the text is taken. Things were looking black for Judah at the time; she was being menaced by the Kings of Israel and Syria to the north, and Ahaz, a weak and wicked monarch, was on the throne. And Ahaz, instead of calling God to his aid and trusting in Him, was for summoning the mighty and brutal

power of Assyria to his help. Now Isaiah, who was statesman as well as prophet, could see that if Assyria were invited to war against Syria and Israel, it would be Judah's turn to suffer next. For once those countries were reduced, there would be no buffer state between her and this colossal world power. Assyria was the real foe. And the folly of Judah's king and statesmen in inviting Assyria to interfere filled Isaiah with the gloomiest anticipations. He saw the people of the northern kingdom driven away, the holy kingdom laid waste, and David's throne overturned. But beyond the immediate disaster Isaiah foresaw a better future. He saw a King given to Judah who should answer to the name Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; and under this mighty Prince he saw David's throne re-established and his kingdom regained. All the enemies that beset them were in that far-off future to be vanquished and brought to nought. David's kingdom was to swallow up every other kingdom. Of the increase of the government of this mighty Prince there was to be no end. And the ground of the prophet's confidence that this would be the glorious issue of things was God. He was not terrified at the thought of Assyria's iron strength; he dared, in spite of it, to dream of victory and dominion for the people of the Lord. Isaiah's God was a living God, with a burning hatred of unrighteousness and sin; intensely, eagerly, passionately active on the side of right and truth. It was in that intense, ardent, eager God Isaiah trusted. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts," he said exultingly, "will perform this."

Now I invite you to think of the "zeal of the Lord." For there is as much comfort in it for us

in these days as there was for Isaiah in Judah's troubled time. I am sufficient of a Calvinist to believe this, that the confidence of victory can only come to us by the vision of the active and zealous God. Do not misunderstand me. I am no fatalist. I am not suggesting that we should fold our hands and let God do the work and redeem the world by His own power. I know that human co-operation is necessary. I know God works by us and through us. But I know this too, that all our labour and toil are in vain if there is no mighty God at work. It is only the remembrance of God that makes us quite sure that our labour is not in vain. For God is not a heedless and uncaring God. He is no mere spectator. He is a Participant in the toil and the conflict. He brings to the task and the conflict all the passion and holy intensity of the Divine Nature. And that is what makes victory sure and a redeemed world certain—"the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this."

The "zeal of the Lord"; let me illustrate it in one or two directions.

Human Redemption.

First of all, let me ask you to think of the *zeal of the Lord in the matter of human redemption.* Think of it on *the scale of the race,* to begin with. From the time when man first turned aside to his wicked ways, God, with all the passion and intensity of the Divine nature, has been seeking to save him. This old Book, from cover to cover, is just the story of God's zeal in redeeming man. God did not look on, heedless and unconcerned, while men went down to death and hell. "A second Adam to the fight and

to the rescue came," says Newman. But long before the second Adam came God had been working for man's salvation. He sent prophet after prophet to plead with men and to warn and exhort them. And some they beat, some they stoned, and some they slew. But so zealous was God in this work of redemption, so intense was His desire to save, that though His messengers met with such treatment He continued to send. The passion to save burned like a holy fire in the heart of God, and repeated disappointments and rejections could not quench it. And when all His messengers, the prophets, failed, at last God sent His Son. He spared not the Son of His love, such was His measureless zeal to save. He gave Him up for us all; He gave Him up to shame and death and the grave. He made the last and uttermost sacrifice in His holy passion of redemption. The Cross of Jesus is just the evidence and the measure of God's infinite zeal to save. And that is how redemption has become possible. If it had depended on man and his own unaided efforts there never would have been escape for us from sin and its pain and dread.

"There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in."

If we are the happy possessors of forgiveness, and peace with God, and the spirit of Sonship, and the immortal hope, we owe it all to God.

"A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came."

Of our redemption we have to confess, "the zeal of the Lord of hosts hath performed this."

Then think of this matter of redemption on *the scale of the individual.* It is not with the race simply that God is concerned. With an intensity of desire and a zeal that never tires God seeks and pursues the unit. How God's zeal to save illumines the pages of this old Book! I catch in its pages the glow of that sacred fire that burns in the heart of God. You see it in a sentence like this: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What a holy ardour to save there must be in God's heart when He, the infinite One, will condescend to knock at the door of the human soul! And there is more than condescension in it, there is patience in it too. For what the Greek says is this: "I have been standing at the door a long time." It is not once God knocks. He knocks and knocks and knocks again. Neglect and refusal cannot exhaust His patience, such is His zeal to save. You see this quality of God's character in those familiar but exquisite stories of the fifteenth of Luke—the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. The shepherd searched the hills and the wilderness for the one lost sheep until he found it. The woman swept the house diligently for the one lost coin until she found it. And I will believe that the father scanned the road by which the younger son had left home every day since his departure, watching, waiting, hoping for his return, so that while he was yet a long way off his *father saw him.* And these stories of unwearied watching and tireless searching simply illustrate God's zeal to save. Indeed, that is why we dare to hope for anybody's salvation. Preaching would be desperate and heart-breaking work because of its manifold disappointments, its apparent fruitlessness, but for one thing. The preacher, in a sense, is seeking men's

souls. But he is not the only one who is in the business—God is in it too: God is seeking. And He seeks with far more earnestness and zeal than the best of preachers. There have been men who have had a rare passion for souls. You have, perhaps, heard the story of the Rabbi Duncan, that famous Oriental scholar of the Scottish Free Church. They told him one day that there was lying in the hospital at Edinburgh an Oriental whose speech no one understood. "I will learn his language," said the famous old scholar, "that I may be able to tell him of the Saviour." But it is in the heart of God the "passion for souls" glows and burns with intensest flame. His zeal to save never tires. When others abandon a man as hopeless, God still pursues him and seeks him and pleads with him. "When father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up." And that is why we must despair of none. Men who seem clean beyond the reach of human help are not beyond God's, and miracles of redemption which were outside human accomplishment may be performed by the zeal of the Lord of hosts. "The zeal of the Lord," all the passion and intensity of the Divine nature are engaged in this work of redemption. He goes after the one lost sheep until He finds it. Is any task of redemption impossible to this mighty zeal? Some men, greatly daring, have ventured to dream of a time "when good shall fall at last—far off—at last, to all, and every winter change to spring." They have dared to dream of a time when every lost sheep shall be found, and every lost coin discovered, and every lost son gathered home; when all souls, though it be by painful and perilous ways, shall be brought back to the fold of God. If there is substance in that great and daring

hope it is because of the tireless passion of God to save. Of such a redeemed and ransomed universe it will have to be said, "the zeal of the Lord of hosts hath performed this."

Holiness of Character.

Think next of the zeal of the Lord in the matter of *cleansing and perfecting character*. God is zealous not simply to save us: He is zealous to set us perfect before His throne. I can only spend a moment upon this point. This is the real meaning of all the varied discipline of life. God is zealous to make us good and pure and holy, meet for the inheritance of saints in light. Joy, sorrow, loss, pain—God uses all these things to refine and purify us. And some of us prove to be very intractable material. Diamonds, as you know, have to be cut and polished before they shine. They have to be submitted to the grinding tool. But I read somewhere about a New York jeweller who had to confess himself beaten by a diamond which had been submitted for a hundred days to a grinding wheel making twenty-eight thousand revolutions per minute. The diamond came out of this ordeal in precisely the same condition as before it was touched. And there are men and women very like that refractory diamond. For all the discipline and training to which they are submitted they do not shine. Peter was very much of that type. He was desperately slow in developing into sainthood. He fell away again and again. Men often despaired of Peter, but the Lord held on. And at last the gem flashed out. Peter became the rock. It was the zeal of the Lord that performed it.

I had sent to me the other week the story of a cleansed and regenerated life. It is called "Out of the Abyss, the Autobiography of One who was Dead and is Alive Again." It is the story—an appalling story—of a woman who became a victim to drink. Nothing availed to stop her in her course. Her children were starved; her house was stripped bare; her husband left her. She became an inmate of an asylum, and then of a hospital. Every one had despaired of her but God. God still laboured at the restoration of that woman's character. And the discipline and sorrow God sent at last did their work. For six years that woman has lived in a radiancy as bright as the gloom of her former abyss was black. She is not only a saved, but a cleansed and sanctified woman. The zeal of the Lord of hosts hath performed this. In Christ Jesus we are all of us called to be saints. And that is what the varied discipline of life is intended to effect—to make us really and actually the saints we are called to be. The soul is so infinitely precious to God that He spares no pains to cleanse and restore it. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." And if we are found at last without spot or blemish, we shall have joyfully to confess that it is the zeal of the Lord which has performed it.

The New Earth.

And then, finally, think of the *zeal of the Lord for the creation of the new earth.* I am back here at the very thought which was in the prophet's mind when he penned this sentence. He had a vision of a world owning allegiance to a glorious Prince of David's line. Isaiah was wrong in his date,

and he was wrong in thinking that the Prince he here describes was already born or about to be born. But the vision is true, and we cherish it still. We look forward to the day when a consentient and unanimous world shall acclaim Jesus as King, and when He shall reign from the river to the ends of the earth. And the justification of our hope is this: God Himself is working for this blessed consummation; He is eagerly, unweariedly, enthusiastically working. There is a curious and interesting little phrase which illustrates what I mean in the book of the prophecies of Jeremiah. The prophet is speaking of the return of the exiles and their re-establishment in Palestine, and this is what he makes God say, or rather what God says through him: "I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and soul." That was why the return was certain—God was in it, with His whole heart and His whole soul. And that is why Christ's universal kingdom is sure—God is working for it with His whole heart and with His whole soul.

"The Lord is a man of war," the old Book says, and it is profoundly and eternally true. Life is a conflict; history is nothing but the story of a conflict; the wide world is a battle-field. There is a ceaseless fight going on between right and wrong, between darkness and light, between good and evil, between truth and error. And the reason why we believe that right and truth will triumph is this: God is in the fight. "The Lord is a man of war." He is a consuming fire against all wickedness and wrong. He labours with His whole heart and His whole soul for the establishment of justice and truth. And that is why—in spite of disappointments and reactions and defeats—we cherish the exultant hope of a

redeemed and regenerated world. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

We have been constrained to think during these past months of the extension of Christ's kingdom in foreign lands. Something like dismay has spread through our ranks because of the insufficiency of our resources. What we need for our good hope is to think more of the sufficiency of God. It is not we and we alone who are concerned in this business. God is in it. God is working in China yonder. He was working there before any missionary landed. God is working in India yonder. He was there before Carey arrived. Labourers in those distant lands realize that there is a great Another who fights for them and with them. And that is why I believe that China with its teeming millions will some day be part of Christ's empire; and that is why I believe that India, the fairest possession of the British Crown, will flash one day like a diamond in the crown of Christ. God, with all the passion and intensity of His Divine nature, is toiling for this glorious consummation, and the zeal of the Lord of hosts will in due time perform this.

And I bid you think for your encouragement and good hope of the *zealous God*. We despair only when we forget God or suppose He does not care. But He is the zealous God. He labours for the salvation of men and the redemption of the world with a zeal that can only be measured by the Cross of Christ. That zeal is not going to be baffled or beaten.

> "Empires, temples, sceptres, thrones,
> They shall all for Christ be won."

"The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." The zealous God! With such a God what ought

we to be? A zealous people! Tepid, lukewarm people God cannot away with. He spews them out of His mouth. He can make no use of them. They thwart his working. They impede His progress. They limit the exercise of His power. That is what is amiss just now. The zealous God has to work by and through a tepid people. We are not straitened in Him; we are straitened in ourselves. What we want is a baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. When there is a zeal in us corresponding to and answering the zeal of God, what things we shall see —souls saved, lives redeemed, a world regenerated, the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

III

THE BENEFITS OF LIMITATION

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know."—JOB xi. 7, 8.

JOB'S three friends, with all the will in the world, were not particularly successful comforters. Perhaps Job would have had more grateful memories of their visit if they had just clasped his hands and said nothing at all. It was sympathy of that silent sort they gave him at the first. "They sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great." That is what Froude calls "majestic tenderness"! And had they been content to leave it there, Job would have thought of these friends, who came every one from his own place just to sit near him in his grief and desolation, with fervent affection and gratitude! Sometimes the very best thing we can do in face of trouble is to say nothing. "I was dumb, because Thou didst it." But these friends felt it was laid upon them to justify the ways of God to man. And so it came about that instead of "comforting" Job, they added to his hurt. For they started from the assumption—which was the orthodoxy of the day—that trouble and loss were just the consequences of sin, and that therefore Job must have sinned grievously to have exposed himself to such calamities as those which had overwhelmed him. It was this suggestion of theirs that Job—spite of his

reputation for piety—must have been in some way a bad man that provoked the patriarch to the indignation and rebellion which mark his speeches in this book.

In making this suggestion of theirs the three friends were wrong. God Himself repudiates their line of argument, and says that they had spoken of Him to His servant Job the things that were not right. Indeed, it was to challenge and rebut the orthodox half-truth that temporal loss and disaster meant moral guilt, that the book was written. Even "good and perfect" men like Job—that is the great lesson of the book—may be called upon mysteriously to suffer, and their suffering is no reflection on their goodness. But although the assumption from which they started was wrong, the three friends in the course of their speeches managed to say certain things that were profoundly and eternally true. My text is such a saying. Zophar on the whole was the bluntest and most dogmatic of the three friends. The other two deal as tenderly as they can with Job. But Zophar, in view of Job's denials and refusals to confess his sin, deals faithfully with him. And yet, blunt and almost brutal though he is, he manages to say things which every one must take into account when he confronts the problem of life's sorrow and pain. The particular truth he enunciates here is that God's plans are too vast for our mortal minds to comprehend. His wisdom, like His love, passeth knowledge. To understand God's dealings man would need a mind that could range through heaven and hell, and could grasp issues that stretch themselves out into eternity. In a word, to understand God man would need a mind as big as God's. "High as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol, what canst

thou know?" Here was poor Job, seeking to understand the reason for the mysterious Providences that had overtaken him, beating himself against his own limitations, as a prisoned eagle beats itself against the bars of its cage. What is the use? says Zophar. Mortal man can never find out the Almighty unto perfection. His ways always transcend our feeble range of sight. There must be things in the dealings of the Infinite God that finite man cannot understand.

And Zophar's contention is as true to-day as on the day it was uttered. Indeed, it is so obvious as to be almost a truism. There is such a thing as a humble, reverent, Christian Agnosticism. In face of God's Providences, all we can do is to confess our ignorance, while at the same time clinging to the belief that always and everywhere the Judge of all the earth will do right.

Now, speaking broadly, we are inclined to rebel against this limitation of our knowledge. "Oh, that I knew!" cried Job in the anguish of his soul. And we often say the same sort of thing. We look on our ignorance as a disability. We chafe under it and fret and fume against it. Walking by faith comes very hard sometimes, and we would give anything for a "sight" of God and of His wise and loving Hand. And I am not going to say that "sight" would not bring comfort to many a perplexed and troubled soul. Things happen in life that seem so inexplicable, so dreadfully hard to reconcile with our belief in the love of God. It would help us to bear them if we could see clearly God's hand in them, if we could see the "reason" for them, if we could see the loving purpose that was working itself out through them. But all this is "hid from our eyes." And the result is, we find the darkness of our ignorance some-

times almost intolerable. But we must not, on that account, rashly come to the decision that our ignorance is an evil thing; that the limitations of our knowledge are a burden and a penalty. Before pronouncing judgment we must balance advantages against disadvantages. We are constantly making these profit and loss transactions. When two possible courses of action offer themselves, we may find that whichever we choose we shall have to give up something, but we settle on the one which promises the largest net gain. And if the net result is gain, we do not say much about the sacrifices, we reckon our action a profitable one. Well, the disadvantages of our limited knowledge are obvious enough. But the disadvantages are only half the story. There are certain advantages that attend upon our limited vision, though perhaps we do not often think of them. And when we balance the advantages of our limitations over against the disadvantages, it may begin to appear to us that our ignorance, far from being a burden, is a blessing and a benefit, and that God was thinking for our good even when He placed these narrow limits on our vision.

And that is the point about which I wish to speak for a few minutes—I want to speak about the *blessedness of not seeing*. Being what we are, men and women with a few brief years to live, and life being so critical and decisive, I want to show you that the narrow limits set upon our knowledge bring such advantages in their train as to make the limitation a benefit.

In view of this sermon I turned up my encyclopædias to see what they had to say about the eye, and about vision and about the laws of optics. They have many most interesting things to say, but on the whole

I do not think I will trouble you with what I learned there about the scientific laws of sight. Let me rather speak in the figurative, unscientific perhaps, but on the whole fundamentally true speech of the common people. Here, then, is the simple fact—our physical vision is limited. The limits vary in different persons it is true. Some have what we call short sight, and some have long sight. Some people can see things at a distance quite clearly, but they cannot see the things that are near; and some people can see the things that are near and cannot see the things that are far. But even in the case of a person who has normal, not to say perfect, sight the vision is limited. He is limited (I know this term is unscientific, but let me use it) in what I may call his *round-about* sight. That is to say, beyond a certain distance to his right hand and his left he cannot see, and is quite ignorant of what is happening. Then, again, he is limited in his *forward* sight, partly, no doubt, by the configuration of the earth, the horizon (as we call it) limiting his vision, and partly, also, by the limitation of the power of vision itself—so that at a certain distance forward objects grow indistinct and finally invisible. Now it is much like that with our moral vision, our power of understanding. We are strictly limited on every side. Our capacity to grasp things is confined within narrow bounds. And that limitation, I want to persuade you, is not a burden, but a benefit.

Our Round-about Sight.

Let me begin with what I have termed our *round-about sight.* Our *breadth* of understanding is limited. We sometimes say that a man is *parochial* in his

interests. The world for him revolves around the parish pump. Of course, it is a pity if a man never lifts his eyes round about and remembers that outside his own village or town there is a vast world. But there is a sense in which we are all parochial, and in which it is perfectly right we should be. The things that loom largest before us are the things that lie nearest to us. Our own affairs, the anxieties and joys of our own family circle, these are the things that principally occupy our minds; sometimes we have no thought for anything beyond. A mother, watching by the bedside of a sick child, could easily be deaf to the booming of the cannon in the Balkans. In one sense this inability to embrace the world in our interests and sympathies is a limitation, but the limitation is really not a doom, but a dower.

It adds to the *efficiency of life*. Breadth is often the foe of intensity and effectiveness. The man who spreads himself out over a thousand fields is often effective in none. People put "blinkers" on horses. They deliberately narrow their range of vision. They keep the road better when their vision is concentrated upon it. And so God has limited our moral vision: we cannot take in the world and its varied interests. But the limitation is not a deprivation, but a benefit. It helps us to do all the better the bit of work God has committed to us here. A certain narrowness and concentration are necessary to effectiveness. If our eyes could be in the ends of the earth, our work here in Bournemouth would suffer. If we had the capacity for being as keenly interested in the Antipodes as we are in the affairs of our own family or town, the distraction would be so incessant that all efficiency would be sacrificed. But happily we cannot be. God has put limits on the breadth of our interests that we may be

the better able to serve the counsel of God in our own day and generation.

And this limitation ministers to the *happiness of life*. It is a blessing we cannot take into our thought the wide world. Most men have just as much as they can carry with the burden of those near and dear to them. Take that one matter of the world's pain. We cannot take it in. We cannot understand it. We cannot feel it. The old world was a far quieter world than our modern world. Men dwelt apart in the old days as they cannot do now. News filtered from one place to another slowly and uncertainly. Catastrophes might happen in foreign lands and the average Englishman know nothing about them. But the daily newspaper nowadays brings the world to our doors every morning. And the result is we often breakfast on horrors, for the telegraph reports to us the calamities of the whole world. And yet somehow we fail to take them in. The disaster reported now in Japan does not affect us as nearly as the sickness of a child in our own home.

There is a certain limitation put upon our capacity for feeling. We cannot grasp and take upon ourselves the sorrows and pains of the world. There was only One who was able to do that. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and the Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all, and His heart broke beneath the burden. But as for the rest of us, we simply cannot do it. There is a strict limit upon the range of our "round-about" look. But the limit is itself a blessing. If we saw and felt everything, life would be intolerable. There would never be a gleam of sunshine in it. God narrows our vision that we may not be swallowed up of sorrow overmuch. Our limitation ministers to our happiness. Life has its

nights of sorrow, but because of this very limitation, it has also its mornings of joy.

Our Forward Sight.

Let me pass on now to speak of what I have termed our *forward sight.* Here again we are strictly limited—more strictly limited than we are in the matter of physical sight. As far as our physical vision is concerned we are limited by the horizon, and the horizon is miles away. But as far as our moral vision is concerned, the horizon is much nearer. When the mind begins to peer into the darkness of the future it is entirely baffled. We know not what a day may bring forth. Our moral horizon is the present moment.

Now this is a limitation that we oftentimes feel it is very hard to bear. But once again it has its advantages. The limitation, when we begin to examine it, begins to look not so much a deprivation as a dower. Once more let me point out how it ministers to the *efficiency of life.* The emphasis of the Bible, as has been said again and again, is all on *To-day.* That is all we have. If a man knew that he had a certain number of years in front of him he might take things easily, he might think he had plenty of time, and so grow slack and indolent. But the fact that he has nothing sure except "to-day" forbids all slackness, and makes him diligent and tense and eager. The man who takes life seriously at all, who realizes that this life is his chance, feels he has no moment to waste. He must work while his day lasts, remembering how swiftly the night comes when no man can work. That is the effect that this sense of ignorance has had upon earth's greatest and best—

it has lent intensity to their lives. It has multiplied their achievements. It has made life fruitful, strong, efficient. And, looking at the same truth from the strictly religious point of view, it has made life effective by keeping men faithful to the highest. The New Testament does not speak much about death coming any moment, what it says is that the day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night. That is what the day of death is, it is the day of the coming of the Lord to the individual soul. And just because men have known neither the day nor the hour, they have striven to be faithful to the best, so that whenever the Lord came they might be ready to welcome His appearing. I need not enlarge upon this, but by this solemnizing and purifying influence it has upon men, their ignorance of the future has added enormously to the earnestness and effectiveness of life.

And again, it has not only added to the efficiency of life, but it has made *life tolerable*. We sometimes wish we could see ahead. "Forward," says Burns, "though we cannot see, we guess and fear." The implication of that line is that it is a pity we cannot see; that our doubts and fears are the result of our ignorance. But does any one here really suggest that we should be better off if the limits on our *forward sight* were removed? Why, my brethren, the limitation is not a deprivation, it is a dower. It is this very ignorance of ours that enables us to live at all. The only way we men and women with our capacity for thought and reflection can live at all, is to live by the day. Suppose we could foresee our troubles, what would happen? Suppose we could foresee our sicknesses and the length of them? I know a member of this church who has been ill practically for ten

years. Suppose that when she fell ill she had known that ten years would elapse and she would be only slowly creeping back to health and strength? Do you think she could have borne the prospect? Do you think she would have endured to this day? Has not the limitation of vision been a mercy? Is it not because of the Lord's goodness in narrowing her vision that she has been brought hitherto? One day at a time is as much as most men can carry; when they anticipate to-morrow and the day after, the result is trouble.

Suppose, again, we could anticipate the troubles, losses or even the happinesses of to-morrow, do you not think that would interfere with the work and duty of to-day? Is not that the secret of making the most of life, that our gaze should be limited to the moment that is really ours? Consider, for instance, what would be the effect if we could anticipate the day of our death. Would it not paralyse all our energies? Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, tells us of some people who thought the day of the Lord was at hand, and who consequently gave up their daily avocations. Paul has to exhort them to study to be quiet and to attend to their own business. But nevertheless, this paralysis of life's energies is the inevitable result of even an imaginary forecast of the future. Here is Stephen Graham, for instance, in one of his books on Russia (and on the real Russia there are no books so illuminating as his), telling us of a strange-looking man who appeared amongst the peasants preaching the forthcoming end of the world. He declared that on the 20th of July of a certain year the great and final catastrophe would take place. In anticipation of the day, hundreds of the peasants ceased work and gave themselves up to weep and pray,

and when the day came a number of them in sheer frenzy drowned themselves.

Who would go on doing his simple duty if he knew the date of that great and terrible day? I do not think it would be hard to show that life would become absolutely intolerable, that human life would cease from the face of the earth if the future were revealed to us. It is in mercy to us, that we may live our lives bravely, faithfully and without distraction, that God has limited our vision. Our ignorance is nothing to rebel against; it is not a burden, but a benefit.

The Sense of Dependence.

There is just one other word I want to say. I must say it in a single moment, though it refers to the supreme blessing of all. Up to this point I have spoken of the benefits which accrue to us from the limitation of our vision along the everyday levels of life. Let me add just a sentence about the religious benefit it confers. It brings us *into dependence on God*. Our ignorance breeds such a sense of helplessness in us that we fly for protection and comfort to Him who knows everything and who sees the end from the beginning. And so it comes about that we know something about the touch of God's hand and the clasp of the everlasting arms. I wonder how many of us would fly to God for protection and help if we could see for ourselves? I wonder how many of us would ask Him to be our Shepherd if we ourselves knew the way? If we ourselves could pierce the future, how many of us would pray, "Lead, kindly Light"? It is our ignorance, our weakness, our sense of limitation that has drawn us to God. And is not

that thing a blessing which brings us to God? Is not that thing a blessing which has made us feel that beneath us are the Everlasting Arms? We sing—

"I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast."

Ought not we to count that a boon and a benefit which drives us *to* God's breast? You remember all about Paul's thorn in the flesh. He looked upon it as an evil. He prayed God to remove it. Instead of removing it God gave him grace to bear it. Paul's thorn brought him new revelations of what God could do, with the result that he came to look on his thorn not as an evil, but as a benefit. "I glory in my weaknesses," he says, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He blessed the very pain that brought him this new experience of Christ's love and power. And is not that limitation a blessing that brings us the touch of God's Hand—that makes us feel that He is caring for us and keeping us? For to know God, to enjoy His Presence, that is peace and security and perfect happiness. When we have Him we have all things and abound.

So, after all, this limitation of ours—which casts us on God—is not a doom, it is a dower. Perhaps on second thoughts we would not have it otherwise. Perhaps on second thoughts we are ready to make the words of the familiar hymn our own, and say—

"So on I go—not knowing,
I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God,
Than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk by faith with Him,
Than go alone by sight."

It is verily true, as our Lord said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

IV

"WHEN THE HALF-GODS GO, THE GODS ARRIVE"

"*When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.*"—1 COR. xiii. 10.

I AM not going to be led off into a discussion of the glorious hymn in the midst of which I find my text enshrined. I am not even going to turn aside to say a word about those gifts of prophecy and tongues which are the "partial" and "temporary" things the Apostle has specially in his mind here. It is to the general truth set forth in the text itself that I want to confine my attention and yours. What Paul says here amounts practically to this: change, he declares, is in the nature of things and inevitable, but the changes that are sure to come we need not fear to see, for this simple but sufficient reason, that the change is always from the fragmentary to the complete, from the partial to the perfect, from the good to the better, and the better to the best. Of course I take it for granted that Paul is speaking here within the circle of the Christian faith. When he lays down this law, he only lays it down for Christian people. It is obviously *not* true to say that for everybody every change is a change for the better. The decay of the outward man may be a prophecy of enrichment to the person whose inward man is being renewed day by day. But it is mere and sheer loss to the person who has not got an inward man waiting to emerge into free and unshackled life. "To die" may be "gain" to one who knows he is

going to depart and be with Christ, but if a man has not any Christ to go to, then death is loss, for it robs the man of the only life he has. No; it is only to those who love God that all things work together for good. It is only for the Christian that the changes which life brings are changes for the better. But for the Christian, changes makes not for impoverishment, but enrichment. The partial only disappears to make way for the perfect; the second best only disappears because the best is at the door. And that is why we should not grieve when in the providence of God we are deprived of this cherished possession or that, because God only takes a good thing away to substitute a better in its place. "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron." Gaslight and electric light are very good second bests. We could not do without them. We are glad to make use of them when darkness falls. But when the day breaks and the sun begins to shine, we turn off gaslight and electric light without any pang of regret. After all, they are but "broken lights" of the sun, and when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part is done away. One of the glories of the springtime is the flowering of our fruit-trees. The blossoming of the apple-tree makes a picture in which every one with the least bit of the artist's soul within him cannot help but rejoice. But when the blossoms fall we do not break our hearts about it; in fact we would not keep the blossoms on even if we could. The blossom is preliminary to and prophetic of the fruit. And when the blossom falls it is that the fruit may come. The good has given place to the better. "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away."

In the winter, gardeners are thankful enough for a greenhouse and for artificial heat to keep the frost off their plants and hasten the growth of certain fruits and flowers. But the heat of the greenhouse is not half so efficacious as summer sunshine. A strawberry forced on in a hot-house is one thing; a strawberry ripened out in the open air is quite another thing. The hot-house after all is only a second best; the gracious quickening warmth of the summer air and sun is the best of all. And so, while the hot-house may be the rule in the winter, the open air is the rule in the summer. When that which is perfect—in the shape of summer warmth—is come, that which is in part (the artificial heat of the hot-house) is done away. Now that is what the providential changes of God mean for the Christian, says St. Paul. They make not for the impoverishment, but for the enrichment of life. They are changes from the fragmentary to the complete, from the partial to the perfect, from the second best to the best.

There is an old and familiar saying, which enshrines the same truth at the heart of it, to this effect: "When the half-gods go, the gods arrive." It has been ringing in my ears all week as I have meditated upon my text. It teaches exactly the same lesson. The half-god goes! It often means a wrench, and leaves us with a sense of deprivation. But the half-god only goes that the god may come. The partial makes way for the perfect: the second best for the best. What a difference it would make to us if we could really believe all this! We are not naturally fond of change. We are distressed and disturbed by it. We develop a pathetic fondness for old and familiar things—for old friends, for old beliefs, for old ways of thought, for old haunts, even for old

clothes. And yet, though we sometimes wish we could make the sun and moon stand still in Ajalon, though we sometimes wish we could keep things exactly as they are, change is continually taking place. We never continue long in any one stay. What a difference it would make to us, what a blessed peace it would bring into our soul, what courage it would give us in face of the vicissitudes of life, if we only honestly and heartily believed this truth—that the providential changes of God are meant for our enrichment; that if some precious thing is taken away, it is that some more precious thing may be substituted for it; that if the half-gods go, it is that the gods may arrive. Now it is about that truth I want to speak with you for a few minutes. I do not know that I can give you mathematical proof of it. It is a truth to be felt rather than proven. It is a matter of faith and not of sight. All I or any one else can do is to try to illustrate and illumine it, to point out certain things of which it is indubitably true, and by making you see that it is true in certain directions, to help you to believe that it is true in all.

The Ascent of Life.

Had I unlimited time, I should begin what I have to say by asking you to notice the testimony to this truth that is borne by *the history of life* in this world of ours. Modern science has radically and completely changed our ideas about the beginning of life. We no longer believe that the world—at the very beginning of things—was stocked with a certain number of living creatures whose shapes and forms were for ever stereotyped and fixed. Science takes us back to the

"primeval slime," to protoplasm, to the amœba, to life in its simplest, most primitive and most elementary form. From that humble beginning all the life upon our earth has come. The various forms of life we see are the result of an evolution extending over measureless time. The various types of creatures we know are the result of an age-long struggle for existence. It is only the fittest that have survived. The buried years are littered with the remains of extinct and perished creatures. They perished because other and better forms of life had been evolved. Throughout the ages there has been what Drummond calls an "ascent of life." The inferior has been giving way to the superior, the second best to the best, until at last life has come to its crown and consummation in the life of man. I need not enlarge or amplify. The history of life in our world illustrates the truth that God's method is always from good to better and better to best. If in the course of the centuries certain forms of life have perished, it has only been that better forms might take their place. That which was in part was done away when that which was more perfect had come.

And the truth that is illustrated in the history of life is illustrated also in the history of *human institutions*. Frankly, I am one of those who believe that the world is a better world to-day than ever it was before. I am no *laudator temporis acti*. I do not believe the golden age is behind. This age of ours may have all the faults and failings the Dean of St. Paul's attributes to it, nevertheless it is the best age the world has known. Changes are rapid and frequent amongst us. Some of them may be mistaken changes. But on the whole, I believe with Tennyson that the world is sweeping into a younger day. Now, in the

process of the suns many venerable institutions have perished. But they have perished only because something better has come to take their place. Slavery was a mighty institution in the ancient world; it has gone, and free service (an infinitely nobler thing), has taken its place. Patriarchal judgment was the rule in the ancient world; it has gone, and the administration of an impartial law (a far nobler thing) has taken its place. Absolute monarchy was the rule in the ancient world; to a large extent it has gone, and government by the consent of the governed (an infinitely nobler thing) has taken its place. And so I might go on illustrating from every department of our social and civic and national life. But there is no need. The fact stands plain for every one to see. If you believe in providential government at all, then it is obvious that God moves from good to better and better to best. Numbers of institutions, useful in their day, have perished. Perhaps at the time of their passing men's hearts almost stood still with fear. They talked, as indeed they do still, about "the end of all things." But looking back from our vantage-ground we can see the change meant not loss, but gain. The old institution passed only because a better was waiting to take its place. This can be written as an epitaph over discarded and obsolete institutions: "When that which was perfect was come, that which was in part was done away."

The Progress of Thought.

But I pass from the history of life and of human institutions with that brief word, to illustrate the same truth from *the progress of Christian thought.* Now there are no changes so disturbing and unsettling and altogether distressing as changes in religious belief

and practice and worship. All the people to whom the Apostles wrote their letters had passed through changes of that peculiarly distressing and disquieting kind. And sometimes, very likely, doubts assailed them as to whether they had not lost by the change. What the Apostles had to do was to convince these converts of theirs that the mighty change they had passed through stood not for loss, but gain. As you know, that is the one theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews. From first to last the author bends all his powers to the task of making his Jewish readers feel that the change from Moses to Christ meant not impoverishment, but enrichment; that it was a case of the partial giving place to the perfect. These people had felt it a tremendous wrench parting with Judaism. For Judaism had a fellowship and a priesthood and an altar. And they had sacrificed all these when they had accepted the Christian faith. It was a real and serious loss. But the sacred writer reminds them that they sacrificed the lesser good only to lay hold of a greater. They sacrificed the visible altar of the Temple, with its reeking sacrifices, to gain another and nobler altar to which they have no right who serve the tabernacle. Instead of the altar on which sheep and goats were slain, they had the Cross on which the Son of God gave up His breath. They sacrificed the visible priesthood, offering sacrifices day by day and year by year which could not take away sin, but they had gained a great High Priest who offered one sacrifice for sins for ever. They had sacrificed the fellowship of their kinsmen according to the flesh, they were driven outside the camp of Israel bearing Christ's reproach; but they had gained a still nobler fellowship, for they had come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly

Jerusalem, to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; "to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel." That was what the change had meant for these Hebrew Christians—infinite enlargement and enrichment. They had come to a larger fellowship, a nobler worship, a more blessed peace. The half-gods had gone, and the true God had arrived. That which was perfect had come, and so that which was in part had been done away.

And what the Apostles say about the change from Judaism to Christianity is true of the changes in thought which have taken place in the course of the centuries within the circle of Christianity itself. Such changes have been frequent, I might even say constant. The forms in which Christian truth is expressed vary from age to age. Doctrines which in one age are regarded as fundamental to the faith are cast away and discarded by the next. The centuries are strewn with the remains of rejected dogmas. I have no doubt that when they were first assailed, many godly people felt that if these dogmas went religion would go too. We know now that their fears were groundless. The old forms perished only because purer and nobler forms of belief were waiting to take their place. Their disappearance meant not loss, but gain. Take the great doctrine of the Atonement, for example. In the early Christian centuries the Fathers almost without exception looked upon the sufferings of Jesus as a ransom paid to the Devil. Later theologians taught that they were an expiation offered to an angry God—a sort of *quid pro*

quo—so much suffering endured as an equivalent for human sin. To-day we think not so much of the physical suffering as of the perfect obedience and the perfect penitence revealed in the Cross. No doubt the changes as they occurred troubled many; the citadel of the faith seemed in process of surrender; but we recognize to-day that the changes have not meant loss, but gain; we have been receiving fuller light; the partial has been making place for the more perfect; the half-gods have been going that the gods might arrive.

Think of the Reformation time. That was a time of enormous change and upheaval. The beliefs of centuries were overturned in an instant, so to speak. The entire conception of religion was changed for multitudes. Luther tore down the ideas of the sacraments and the ministry and the plan of salvation in which men had been bred and born. It was a time of consternation and fear and panic. To many Luther's movement seemed the destruction of religion itself. But looking back we can see the change was a change for the better. Religion became infinitely more real and vital by becoming personal and free. We date some of our priceless privileges to Reformation times. The partial truth of Catholicism gave place to the larger truth of Protestantism. The half-gods went that the gods might arrive.

And generally, no one can doubt that as the result of the ceaseless changes of the centuries we are nearer the truth to-day than we ever have been. We know God to-day as the world has never known Him before. We are acquainted with Christ as no age has been acquainted with Him, save possibly the first. None but the most hopelessly jaundiced and prejudiced will deny that the net result of the changes of the centuries

has been gain, that all the way through, the partial has been making way for the more perfect truth.

And from the testimony of history I take to myself the comfort that gain will be the net result of our present upheaval and unrest. It is a very anxious and distressful time. Many hearts are sorely troubled about the attacks made upon some of our most venerable beliefs at the present time. And there is every excuse for their trouble, for some of the ideas that are set forward assail the very foundations of the Christian faith. And yet I view the future with confidence. I am quite confident the ultimate result will not be loss, but gain. For no truth is going to perish. That is the quality of truth—no weapon formed against it can prosper. Possibly some of the forms in which we state our truth may have to be altered. But the alteration will be for the better. The issue of every time of controversy and unrest has been a purer and nobler faith. There is one verse from the old Book we may take for our comfort just now, and it is this: "Thine heart shall fear and be *enlarged*." These times of panic and distress always issue in enlargement. Nothing good or true is going to perish. But if changes come we shall find they mean enrichment and enlargement. So let us be of good cheer. God never takes a backward step. If He takes from us an old and cherished form of faith it is to substitute a better. If the partial truth we have held is taken from us it is only to make room for the more perfect. When the half-gods go the gods arrive.

The Personal Life.

I pass on now from the realm of thought to consider this truth as illustrated in the region of *personal life*

and experience. And here I frankly confess we must walk by faith and not by sight. That the changes that have taken place in the course of the centuries in human institutions and human thought have resulted in gain, that in them all the partial has been making way for the more perfect, we can to all intents and purposes prove. But when it comes to the individual life and to taking stock of the effect of the various changes that befall us, it is impossible mathematically to demonstrate that they issue in gain. We can only believe that God will act in accordance with the character He reveals on the broad plain of history and point out certain facts in individual experience that go to ratify and confirm that faith. Let us always remember this, God is essentially a *giving* God. He does not delight in taking away. His delight is in giving, bestowing, enriching. He so delights in giving that He gave His only begotten Son. It would be a contradiction of everything about God revealed in history and in the Cross to think that He takes any pleasure in inflicting deprivation and loss upon His people. God's deprivations are meant to prepare for greater bestowments. He takes away a good that He may confer a better. The half-gods go that the gods may come. For instance, He took Joseph away from the home where he had been petted and fondled. It seemed sheer loss at the time; but it issued in gain, for he became the ruler of Egypt and the means of saving his father's house. He took away from Judah Uzziah, the great and mighty King, and so robbed Isaiah of his earthly prop and hope. It seemed sheer loss at the time; but it issued in gain, for instead of building on Uzziah, Isaiah learned to build on Almighty God. When the sisters of Bethany sent that touching message to Jesus, "He whom Thou

lovest is sick," it was to all intents and purposes an appeal to Him to hurry to their help. And instead of responding to it He abode two days in the place where He was. If He had gone He would have saved Lazarus from death. But he had a greater thing than that in His mind. He was minded not simply to restore Lazarus to them, but to give them also assurance of the life to come and triumph over death. He denied the half-boon the sisters asked for that He might confer a still richer boon upon them. Paul prayed thrice that his "stake in the flesh" might be taken away. He prayed that the affliction from which he suffered might be removed and physical health restored. God denied the prayer. He refused the lesser gift Paul asked for because He had a far better gift to bestow. He did not give him health, but He gave him rich supplies of Divine grace. Paul asked to be strong in himself; the answer was to make him strong in God. The loss of health did not really impoverish him, it enriched him by bringing him amazing revelations of the Divine grace, so that it was when he was weak that he became really strong.

Now may not these serve as illustrations of the Divine working? As life progresses many things are taken away from us. But God's intention is not impoverishment, but enrichment. Something better is bestowed to take the place of the lesser gift withdrawn. And the lesser had to be taken away before the greater and better blessing could be conferred. It often happens, does it not, that a man's worldly happiness and comfort has to be shattered before a man is led to seek the peace of God? It often happens that it is the loss of human friendship that makes men seek a friend in the unchanging God. It often happens that it is the withdrawal of human love that makes men shelter in

that great love from which neither death nor life can ever separate us. If I may refer to my own experience, it has been the loss of this and the other earnest worker and generous helper that has made me lean more simply upon the eternal God. And that is not loss, however hard the experience may be, which brings more of God into our lives. If a man suffers the loss of all things but gains Christ, he is no loser. If the departure of earthly friends causes a man to make a friend of Jesus, he is no loser. If the loss of human love makes a man comprehend the length and breadth of the love of God, he is no loser. The partial has given way to the perfect; the half-gods have gone, the gods have arrived. And that is the Divine intention for your life and mine. The changes the years bring were not meant to leave us poorer, they were meant to lead us into an ever-growing experience of the love and grace of God. Life was meant to become richer, fuller, deeper as the years pass. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be full of sap and green." "At eventide it shall be light." "The path of the just is like the light of dawn, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The Life to Come.

I finish by saying that the truth holds good of the *life to come*. That is the mightiest change of all—when a man says farewell to this familiar world. But that too is a change for the better. It is when this broken, partial, fettered life ends that the perfect life begins. It is when the half-gods go that the gods arrive.

"On the earth the broken arcs,
In heaven the perfect round."

The saints have never been unwilling to part with the present. "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ," says St. Paul. "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus," cries St. John. And the reason for their willingness to be gone is that they knew the life on the other side was so much richer and fuller. And we need not shrink or fear when our time comes. No! there is no need to wish to be taken. This life is a good life, and we ought to cherish it. But we ought not to shrink or fear when called upon to leave it. For death does not mean impoverishment, but enrichment. "To die is gain." We bow our heads, at going out we think, and enter straight

> "Another golden chamber of the king's,
> Larger than this we leave and lovelier."

That is the uniform testimony of the Bible. Richer, fuller, more abundant life is our portion in the world to come. At the best we are crippled and hampered and limited here; we cannot be what we want to be or do what we would; but there, life is abundant, strength is sufficient, joy is constant.

> "Then shall we see and feel and know,
> All we desired or hoped below;
> And every power find sweet employ
> In that eternal world of joy."

"Douglas," said a young Scottish nobleman, as he lay a-dying, to the brother who was to succeed him in the title, "Douglas, you will soon become a duke, but I shall be a king!" That is it; even in the last change God is giving us silver for our iron, and gold for our brass. That which is "in part is taken away, that that which is perfect may come."

I have spoken very inadequately and imperfectly. I finish by saying that all this is true only within the Christian circle. It is true only of those

who love God and possess Him. To the man who does not know God and love Him, life must be a gradual course of impoverishment. The years gradually rob him of friends and acquaintances, of health and strength, and finally of life itself. And if he possesses nothing outside this life, if his affections have all been set on things beneath, his life is a life of loss ending in bankruptcy. But if he has God he becomes richer and richer as the years pass. For passing time brings him nearer to God, admits him to ever-enlarging experience of His love and grace, and death at last opens the gates into His very presence. What is life doing for you, enriching you or impoverishing you? Is it loss or gain? Lest loss, eternal loss be your portion—

> "Lay hold on Christ, and He shall be
> Thy joy and crown eternally."

V

THE FAITH DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

"*Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.*"—JUDE 3.

"CONTEND earnestly." It is a call to arms! It is a summons to battle! It is an incitement to war! At first hearing it sounds a strange bit of advice for a New Testament writer to give. For the Gospel this book preaches is a Gospel of *peace*. Here are a handful of precepts, picked almost at random from its pages. "Seek peace and pursue it." "As far as lieth in you live peaceably with all men." "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all." Put that last sentence side by side with the phrase of my text: "Contend earnestly," says Jude; "The servant of the Lord must not strive," says St. Paul. They look like two hopelessly discordant and antagonistic counsels. The one ingeminates peace, the other incites to war. But the discord is really only in seeming. "I am for peace at any price," said a well-known Englishman of the last generation; then he added slowly, "even at the price of war." That is the Gospel position—it is for peace at any price, even at the price of war. If we read our Bibles with impartial and wide-open eyes, we shall see that it has as much to say about war as it has about peace. The clash of arms, the noise of battle goes sounding through its pages. You can discover both peace and war in the speech of our Lord Himself. Here are two

words of His spoken on the selfsame evening—the last evening of His life: "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful." And within a few minutes of his utterance of that gracious, comforting word about peace, He was saying this to His disciples: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his cloke and buy one." The vision of peace has given place to the vision of war, bloody, deadly, implacable.

Indeed, I can produce a sentence from Christ's teaching which puts the seeming contradiction in still more absolute and staggering form. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," that is His word on one occasion. His word on another seems to be the exact opposite: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth, I came not to send peace but a sword." At one time the Christian life seems represented as a *warfare,* and at another as a *peace.* And yet, I will affirm there is no real contradiction. On the contrary, I will quote this double representation as an illustration of the sanity of the Bible. There is nothing partial in its outlook. It sees life steadily, and sees it whole. It preaches both war and peace. Peace is the glorious and blessed end of the work of Christ. Peace is to be the happy lot of the Christian man. But the Bible does not delude men by crying peace when there is no peace. The path of peace is often by the bloody and ruthless path of war. And the Bible is for peace at any price—even at the price of conflict and agony and blood. And so, side by side with its fair promises of peace may be found urgent, clamant calls to war. There is no real antagonism. The war is in the interests of peace. And so without sense of contradiction—on the con-

trary, with the feeling that essentially they were in the deepest and profoundest harmony—we find Paul saying, "The servant of God must not strive," and Jude crying out, "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

Contention in the Interests of Concord.

I say the warfare to which the Gospel urges us is all in the interests of peace. The battle it bids us wage with sin is a battle in the interests of peace. We have to cut and smite and slay our own lusts and passions. There is absolutely no chance of peace for us so long as they run riot in our souls. There is no peace for the wicked. The old man has to be crucified, our pleasant vices and sins have to be destroyed utterly before we can know anything about the peace of God. The warfare to which Jude is summoning the early Christians in my text is not a warfare against individual sin, but a warfare against destructive heresies in the interest of the *peace of the Church*. There could be no peace for the Church so long as men denied the Lordship of Christ, and denied that sin was sin and so turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. These heresies were absolutely fatal to the Christian faith. For the Church to ignore them, or remain silent in face of them would be not peace, but suicide. You remember that bitter epigram of the Latin historian about some of the Roman conquests: "They made a desolation and called it peace"? That is what would have happened in the early Church if its members had remained silent and dumb in face of heresies like these; they would not have secured a peace,

they would have turned the Church into a desolation. When errors like these were abroad, it was not their business to talk about peace, it was their business to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." The contention was imperative in the interests of a real concord.

"Contend earnestly for the faith." This letter was written probably somewhere about the year A.D. 64, within some thirty years of the death of Christ, and while the first generation of Christians was still alive. Right away from its very beginning the Christian faith has had to fight for its life. It was cradled in conflict. It has lived ever since amid the din and the dust of battle. Think of the conflicts it has passed through! It had first of all to fight for its life against the attack of a narrow and strangling Judaism. It had scarcely escaped from that danger before it had to meet the menace of a latitudinarian and demoralizing Gnosticism. It had barely survived these assaults when it found itself face to face with Manicheism and the subtle but deadly perils of Arianism. And the history of the first four centuries has been the history of the centuries that have followed since. Materialism, Sacerdotalism, Deism, Rationalism—the faith has had to contend with them all. Its existence has been a battle, its life a daily struggle.

Science has a great deal to say about the struggle for existence. That is how Science conceives of the sentient Universe as a battle-field in which a grim and pitiless struggle is waged for bare life. It is war to the knife. It is fighting without quarter. And in this merciless struggle the weak and the unfit all go to the wall. This is Nature's cruel but effective method of ensuring progress. It weeds out the inferior and the

backward, and keeps only the best. It is the fittest that survive, and the fact of their survival proves their fitness. Well, I could base an argument for the supremacy of the Christian faith on the mere fact that it has survived the numberless perils of the past centuries. Those centuries are littered with discarded systems and theories and philosophies. But this faith which has passed through fire and water, which has been assailed by multitudes of fierce and implacable foes, which has breathed the atmosphere of battle from the day of its birth, has not only survived but has grown in power and influence from year to year. And why has it survived? I answer: It has survived because it was the fittest. The history of Christianty is one of the mightiest proofs of its Divinity and truth.

And still it lives and moves and has its being in the region of conflict and battle. And still it behoves Christian people to "contend earnestly" for the faith. For if the faith has endured to the present moment, it has been because men thought it worth fighting for and dying for. I think of the mighty defenders of the faith of the Christian centuries, of Paul and John, of Athanasius and Augustine, of Luther and Calvin, of Bishop Butler and Bishop Lightfoot—it is by the efforts of men like these, who lived laborious days and spent strength and life in the defence of the Gospel, I say it is by the efforts of men like these and others like-minded to them that the faith has survived all the assaults made upon it and endures in power unto this day. And to "contend earnestly" is still our Christian duty. It is still a day of conflict, not of peace. The "faith" is still in the midst of foes, and we must battle valiantly in its defence.

Now in saying all this I may seem to some of you to be setting the seal of my approval to religious

controversy and strife, and you tell me that of all the things that have happened to the detriment of religion religious contention and controversy have been the most detrimental of all. I agree! The story of our religious controversies is a deplorable story. The page on which they are written is a shameful page. I will go further, and say that our controversies and strifes are the scandal and reproach of religion to this day. But having admitted that much, I want to go on to say that the mischief has been not so much in our controversies as in the things we have contended about. I am not going to subscribe to the limp and sloppy doctrine, all too popular in our day, that contention under all circumstances is to be deplored. That idea is born not of Christian charity, but of mere and sheer indifferentism. It is because we care so little for anything that we find it so easy to say, "Let us live at peace together." Men who care deeply are always ready to contend strongly. I am not ashamed of the Church's "fighters," of the men who cared deeply and fought strenuously. I thank God for Paul and John and Athanasius and Luther! The Church owes them an immeasurable debt. And it would be for the untold good of the Church if men felt strongly enough to contend earnestly in these days of ours. Contention is not wrong so long as the things we contend for are worth contending about. The disgrace and shame of our controversies consist in this, that we fight about things that are not worth fighting for. I think it was John Bright who said that in all history there were not more than three or four justifiable wars. And that is the charge that can be brought against so many of our "contentions"—they are unjustifiable; they are contentions about things that do not matter; we strive to no profit. There have been some "justifiable"

contentions. I believe Paul's great fight against Judaism was such an one; I believe John's contention with Gnosticism was such an one; I believe Athanasius' grim conflict with Arianism was such an one. But the mischief of our present-day contentions is that they are contentions about things that do not count. What are the controversies that rend and tear Christ's Church to-day? They are controversies not so much about religion as about things ecclesiastic. We are split up into a number of separate, often rival, and sometimes warring sects, to the dishonour of the Gospel and the delay of the kingdom by differences about orders and ritual and administration. Catholic, Anglican, Free Churchman—we have all one faith, one Lord, one baptism; but we quarrel fiercely over the validity of orders, the necessity of Episcopal ordination, and the proper method of Church government. We wax hot and angry and bitter in our controversies about these things. We wax so hot and angry that, like Barnabas and Paul, we forget brotherhood and renounce friendship, and treat one another as foes rather than as allies. I agree that these ecclesiastical controversies are unjustifiable controversies. I agree that they are the Church's weakness and shame. The man who stirs up ecclesiastical strife need not think that he is obeying this Apostolic precept. The divisions, animosities, enmities and consequent weakness and failure of the Christian Church lie at the door of him and of his kind.

Contention for the Faith.

There is only one thing for which a Christian man may contend, and for that he not only *may*, but *must*, and that is "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." But here at once we are confronted by the

question, "What is the faith once for all delivered to the saints?" The question is not altogether easy to answer. But in trying to answer it, I may be allowed to begin by pointing out that the very form of the Apostolic precept rules out things ecclesiastic and dogma. This "faith" for which Christians were to contend was something already "delivered" when Jude wrote. That mere fact makes it beyond dispute that Jude had no question of ecclesiastics or Church polity in his mind. The first century did not trouble itself about "orders"; it knew nothing of a stereotyped ministry; it did not tie itself down to any particular form of Church government. And it certainly did not trouble itself about dogma and credal statement. No Church Council ever met, no formal creed was ever promulgated. In the first century creed and organization were all simple, elastic, free. The first century was neither the age of organization, nor the age of doctrinal reflection—those came later, in the second and third centuries; the first century was the age of evangelization. The Apostles and first preachers were quite content just to tell the story of Jesus in its simplest form. They preached the facts about Him. They preached His gracious life, His death, His resurrection, and on the strength of these facts invited men to accept Him as the Son of God and to trust Him for the salvation and redemption of their souls. We must entirely and completely banish from our minds the idea that "the faith" referred to here is anything like the so-called Catholic faith of later days which is expressed in certain intricate and metaphysical creeds. No doubt certain great theological and philosophical problems were involved in the simple statements that Jesus was the Son of God and the Saviour from sin. They involved the

problems of the relationship between Jesus and God, and the relationship between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sin, but the early Christians did not trouble themselves with speculations upon these deep themes. These speculations came later, when Christianity came into touch with Greek philosophy. The Apostles and early preachers moved in the region not of theories, but of facts. They preached Christ as Lord because He had risen, and they preached Him as Saviour because He had brought to them the assurance of their own redemption and release. Such, history tells us, was the simple "faith" of the early Church, and such is the "faith" for which Jude bids his readers contend.

But we are not left simply to general conclusions from Church history for our understanding of what the Apostle means by "the faith." In the next verse he proceeds to describe the perils by which "the faith" seems to him to be beset, and the foes against whom the lovers of "the faith" have to contend. He declares that ungodly men have crept privily into the Church, "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." That is to say, there were some men who made the grace of God an excuse for sin and said: "Let us sin that grace may abound; the greater the sin, the more splendid the opportunity for the display of God's redeeming love"; they were busy minimizing the heinousness of sin and sapping the morality of the Gospel; and the same men were denying the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ—they were somehow or other impugning His unique and solitary relationship to God. Now it is against these men and their teaching that Jude summons the Christians to whom he is writing to "contend earnestly." When men

minimize the awfulness of sin and deny the Lordship of Jesus, they are destroying the very foundations of the Christian religion. They are denying and subverting the faith—from which we may conclude that the "faith" in Jude's view of it consisted in belief in Jesus as sole and only Lord, and in the obligation of holiness of life. And this is "the faith" for which he bids Christian men contend earnestly. This was the faith "once for all delivered to the saints"—the faith that Jesus is the only Lord, that sin is sin, that holiness of life is the mark of the Christian. This is the faith that binds the centuries together. This is the essential faith on which the Christian Church is built and without which Christianity itself cannot exist.

John ends the Apocalypse, you will remember, with a solemn warning against the man who shall add to or take away from the words of that great prophecy. In a very deep and real sense this "faith once delivered to the saints" is the faith to which we have no right to add anything and from which we dare take away nothing.

We can *add nothing to it*. That is to say, we cannot insist that anything else is essential. Of course, many things have been added by the Christian Church in the course of the centuries—we have our creeds and polities and our convictions as to government and administration. And all these may be expedient and useful. The Church naturally advances in apprehension of the truth, and equally naturally adapts her methods to meet the changing needs of the times. But these are not elements in the faith that saves. The Divine right of Episcopacy or Presbyterianism or Congregationalism is no element of saving faith. A theory of the Trinity or the Atonement is no element of saving faith.

The essential faith was in existence before these controversies and discussions arose. We have no right to demand belief in any special statement of doctrine, or form of ecclesiastical polity. The faith "once for all delivered to the saints," the essential faith, the faith that saves, is faith in Jesus as the only Lord and Master, and the recognition of the hatefulness of sin and the obligation of holiness of life; and to that we have no right to add.

And from it we *dare take nothing away*. When we fight about questions of orders and creeds we fight to no profit. But if and when attack is made upon the Lordship of Christ, when men make light of sin, and so seem to minimize the vital importance of holiness of life—then, however unpleasant contention and controversy may be to us, it is time we cast our self-regard aside and contended earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. For you cannot make light of sin, and you cannot sacrifice the unique and unshared Lordship of Christ (and the two things generally go together) without tearing up Christianity by the very roots. For that is the heart and core of the Christian faith—that, in Jesus Christ, God became God manifest in the flesh; and that He did so manifest Himself in the flesh in order to redeem us from sin; for sin was such a terrible and awful thing that in no easier or cheaper way could redemption be bought than by the death of the only begotten Son of God. That is the faith "once for all delivered to the saints." That is the faith whose saving power the saints of the first century had verified in their own experience. This is the essential faith still. The Christian Gospel is a Gospel for a world of sin. It starts with the fact of sin and over against it sets the Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, the only begotten

Son of God. Christianity goes if either the fact of sin or the sole Saviourhood of Christ is surrendered. When these mighty truths are assailed, we not only *may*, we *must*, contend for the "faith once for all delivered to the saints."

Nothing would so conduce to the harmony and concord of Christ's Church as the recognition that it is this simple indispensable faith that really matters. The things that we strive and quarrel about are the accretions and additions of later years. The "faith once for all delivered to the saints" is the common property of us all. I have had a good deal of speech of late with a devout Roman Catholic. Now I may strongly dissent from Roman Catholicism as an ecclesiastical system, and yet I frankly confess it was a delight to me to find that in the really vital and essential things that devout Romanist and I were one. To us both Christ was the one Lord and Master, and the Mighty Saviour from every sin. If Christian people of every name only recognized this, if they concentrated their attention on the essential and the vital, if they were content with the simple faith of the primitive Church, Judah would not vex Ephraim and Ephraim would not vex Judah. Romanist, Anglican, Free Churchman would no longer bite and devour one another—they would recognize one another as brethren because holding the same faith and sharing a common salvation. And for myself I am ready to say with the Apostle, "As many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them and upon the Israel of God."

The Faith and the Saints.

"Contend earnestly for the faith." And what about the result of the contention? The result of it is going

to be the triumph of the faith. There is no fear that the faith is about to be destroyed. And my confidence in the triumph of the faith rests upon this fact, *it is in the keeping of the saints*. It is the saints who have kept the faith alive all down the centuries and who will carry it to its final triumph. Our friends of the Anglican communion make very much of what they call Apostolical succession—the unbroken line of bishops from Apostolic times even until now. And they make much of it in the interests, as they think, of the Christian faith. For their theory is that the deposit of Christian truth was committed to the Apostles and has been handed down from one bishop to another ever since. The "faith" is guaranteed and preserved by this Apostolical succession. I am not going to criticize the theory in detail, and certainly I am not going to criticize it unkindly. But two things must be said. This first: it is historically more than questionable whether any such unbroken line exists; and secondly, the whole theory proceeds upon the assumption that "the faith" consists of a certain definite body of intellectual truth. But "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" was not any statement of intellectual truth, but a *belief springing out of an experience*. Men believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Master and Saviour because, as a matter of fact, they found Him doing God's work upon them and redeeming them from their sins. And that "faith" is going to be kept alive not by theologians and scholars, but by the men and women who have had the same great experience, *i. e.* by the "saints" as the New Testament calls them. The unbroken line of bishops may have no real existence, but about the unbroken line of the "saints"—of saved and redeemed men and women—

there cannot be the slightest dispute. And it is these saved men and women who have kept the faith in Christ as Saviour and Redeemer and Lord alive. They are the people who can speak with authority about it. "The faith" has been once for all delivered not to bishops or officials, or scholars or theologians, but to the "saints."

And that is why I am quietly and serenely confident about the future of the faith. Troublous times come to us still when the Saviourhood of Christ is challenged. Men deny that He is the only Lord and Master. But we need not fall into any panic. The "faith" is perfectly safe, because it is in the keeping of the "saints." The fact is, the tremendous experience out of which the "faith" is born is being perpetually repeated in human lives and hearts. Christ is continually accomplishing His mighty work of redemption on this and that individual. And these "saved men" are the best defenders of the faith. There is a sense in which only those can "contend for the faith" who have experienced it in their own souls. Scholars theorize, the saved man *knows*. So long as there are men like Harold Begbie's "Puncher" and "Old Born Drunk" in the world, we need not get over-anxious about the faith. Critics and scholars in their studies see all sorts of philosophical difficulties. But these men—and others who have shared in the same blessed experience, though in less startling form—know the faith as a blessed fact and power. I am not ungrateful for the work scholars and Christian apologists have done, but after all the defence of the faith does not depend upon them—it has been once for all delivered to the saints. And the saint has never yet been lacking and never will. And that is how we shall become "defenders

of the faith" by opening our hearts to the saving power of Christ. The faith will be safe in our keeping when we can say, "We believe not because of any one else's speaking, but we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

VI

THE ORIGINALITY OF JESUS

"*The officers answered, Never man so spake.*"—JOHN vii. 46.

WHAT would you say was the chief and most abiding impression made by Jesus as a teacher and preacher upon the crowds who listened to Him in Palestine? I have been searching through the Gospels with that inquiry in my mind. I have, so to speak, made myself one of the dispersing crowd in Capernaum, or on the hill-side, or by the seashore after sermon. I have kept my ears open for the comments they had to make upon the sermon and the criticisms they had to offer upon the Preacher. I have made a little catalogue of these "after-worship" remarks. And after studying them closely and weighing them carefully, I have come to the deliberate and settled conclusion that the feature of Christ's teaching which most deeply and profoundly impressed the multitude was its *originality*.

No doubt there were other qualities in Christ's preaching that impressed them, as, for instance, the *charm* of it. Christ was an interesting preacher. His parables are still amongst the most exquisite things in literature. The crowds listened entranced—completely oblivious of the flight of time—as He told them the stories of the sower and the seed, and the lost coin, and the lost son, and the marriage feast. And then there was the *authority* of it. The Scribes were second-hand preachers. They were always

quoting authorities. Jesus was His own authority. He spoke as One who was sure of His ground. He never hesitated; He never guessed. He spoke with the calm and assured accents of perfect knowledge. And then, again, there was the obvious *truth* of it. Truth has a self-evidencing power. It authenticates itself. It commends itself to the conscience, and the conscience instinctively recognizes it for truth. Well, that quality was pre-eminently characteristic of the speech of Christ. "Master," even His critics were constrained to say, "we know that Thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth." The people, as they listened to Christ, felt that in His words they were in touch with the great realities of the spiritual world. Their hearts responded to what He said. "Master," said His disciples one day, "to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And in saying that, the disciples were expressing the thoughts of innumerable hearts. Christ's words, they felt, were spirit and life.

But while *charm, authority* and *truth* were unmistakable elements in the speech of Christ, I repeat again that the final and dominant impression was that of its freshness and originality. To this, no doubt, its charm and authority and truth contributed. But the total impression was that of newness and difference. It was a kind of preaching these Jewish folk had never heard before. It was totally unlike the sort of thing they listened to in their synagogues week by week. Alike in matter and manner it struck them as something entirely new. Let me remind you of some of the comments they made one to another after hearing Christ preach. When He brought to a close that great sermon which we call the Sermon on the Mount, this is what I read about the state of mind

of the multitude who listened to it: "They were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." When He went down to His own city of Nazareth and preached in the synagogue, the people in their amazement began to ask: "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?" After a sermon in the synagogue in Capernaum the people were all amazed, and questioned among themselves, saying: "What is this? A new teaching! With authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits and they obey Him." At the close of another Sabbath morning, at Capernaum, I find the crowd exclaiming in their wonder: "We never saw it on this fashion." And here, in the verse I have quoted as my text, are the temple officers, who had been sent to seize Christ, returning with their errand unfulfilled and putting this forward as their excuse: "Never man so spake." Take all these passages together, and the conclusion is irresistible. To His contemporaries Christ was unique. He was conspicuous because of His unlikeness to the regulation religious teacher of His time. The people had never heard any one like Him. The final impression made by the preaching of Jesus was that of its newness and originality.

All the more amazing, therefore, is it to find that in these days of ours this quality of originality, which to His contemporaries seemed to be the chief characteristic of the teaching of Christ, is the very quality that is challenged and denied. The crowds who actually heard Christ preach were astonished at His preaching—it was so wonderfully fresh and new. Now, nineteen centuries afterwards, people tell us there was really nothing new in it. Christ was a

borrower, they say. There is nothing in His teaching that is not to be found in the sacred books of other religions—books which were written long before Christ came. The Sermon on the Mount is not new; the Lord's Prayer is not new; the Golden Rule is not new; nothing is new; and to prove their case they print in parallel columns the sayings of Jesus on the one side, and the sayings of Buddha or Confucius or the Vedas, or even of Greek and Latin philosophers, on the other. And the object of all this, I suppose, is to take away from the uniqueness of Christ, to oust Him from His place as the Supreme and Incomparable Teacher, to make men believe that there have been other teachers given to the race quite as wonderful as He and so rob Him of His claim to be the complete and final "Word of God" to the human race.

Now, what I want to do for a few minutes further is to inquire into this matter of Christ's originality. Was He original? Or was He a mere borrower, as some modern critics assert? And if He was original, wherein exactly did His originality consist? These are the questions I propose to discuss, and if in my discussion I have to enter a little into technicalities, I beg you to bear with me for the sake of the importance of the subject. For the question I am trying to deal with is a question which, as I know, is seriously perplexing and troubling the minds of some, and must have for all of us a very vital bearing upon the conception we form of the Person and Nature of our Lord Himself.

Christ and Other Teachers.

Before, however, I address myself to the specific question of the originality of Jesus, there is a pre-

liminary word that must be spoken upon the general question of the relation between Jesus and other teachers and religious leaders of our race. Is there any relation at all between them? Is there any relation at all between Jesus and Buddha or Confucius, let us say? Is there any relation at all between our Christian faith and the great faiths of India and China? A century ago, perhaps, the answer given by our fathers would have been "No." They would have classed Buddha and Confucius among the false prophets, and the great religions that bear their name as inventions of the Devil. But we take wiser and truer views of these non-Christian faiths to-day. We regard them not as proofs that the Devil is at work (as our fathers did), we regard them rather as proofs that God is everywhere at work, that He has left Himself nowhere entirely without witness. These great faiths are evidence—as the altar to the unknown God was at Athens—that everywhere men are groping after God, if haply they may feel after Him and find Him. In so far as they convey or embody truth, these non-Christian religions are of God, and in so far as these mighty teachers of the ancient times were able to guide men into truth, it is surely not going too far to say they were inspired of God. There is a great New Testament truth to which, perhaps, in our thinking about these matters we have not attached the weight it deserves, and that is this: Christ was in the world before He was born in Bethlehem. Our world, in the deepest sense, was never a non-Christian world. He was spiritually present with men long before mortal eyes were privileged to behold Him. He was the light, says John in a daring and splendid word, "which lighteth every man coming into the world." "Which lighteth *every man*"—you must not try to

limit or narrow down that sweeping and uncompromising statement. That does not mean every Christian man, it means, literally, every man. Whatever light on truth and God and eternal things a man possesses, that light is the shining of Christ into His soul. You remember what that couplet of our hymn says—

> "Every virtue we possess, and every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness, are His alone."

That is as true of the heathen as it is of ourselves. There never was a falser thing said than that statement of one of the old fathers, that "the virtues of the heathen were splendid vices." The virtues of of the heathen are just the flashings of the light of Christ. Whatever is true in Buddha and Confucius is the product of Christ in them. And inasmuch as Christ *was* in them, I ought not, and indeed I am not in the least surprised to find in them gleams and anticipations of the eternal truth which was fully revealed in Christ. I am not therefore in the least disturbed that scholars should find in the Confucian books and in the Buddhist writings truths similar to those which are proclaimed by Christ in His Gospel. The truth is, the relation between Christ and Buddha and Confucius and other pre-Christian teachers is not to be conceived as being the antithesis of the false and the true. It ought rather to be conceived of as the relation between the partial and the perfect, between the incomplete and the complete, between the morning twilight and the full blaze of day. That is exactly how the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews conceives of the relation of Christ to all who went before Him. God had spoken to the fathers in divers portions and by diverse manners—it was broken, partial revelation

of truth He had given; but in these latter days He has spoken to us the full and complete truth—in His Son. You remember Milton's great paragraph about Truth in his *Areopagitica?* "Truth came once into the world," he says, "with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look upon." But since our Lord left the earth, men have done with truth what the Egyptians, according to the old story, are fabled to have done with Osiris—hewn her form into a thousand pieces and cast them to the four winds. And, ever since, what the friends of Truth have done has been to gather up the torn and scattered limbs of Truth and put them together, until Truth stands once again amongst us perfect and complete. Now Milton's noble simile may be applied to the days before Christ with as much, or even more, truth than to the days after Him. Before He came Truth was torn into a thousand pieces; all that seekers after truth could do was to pick up a broken fragment here and there. But at last truth came together member to member and limb to limb, and in the Person of Christ flashed her perfect glory upon our astonished world. That is the relation between Christ and all teachers who preceded Him. He is their completion and crown. I hope you will not count it an irreverent thing to say—He was the fulfilment of Buddha as well as of Isaiah. Of all who went before Him you can say—

> "They were but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

The bearing of all this upon the question of Christ's originality is plain. I ought not to be in the least degree disturbed by the fact that men have found parallels to His words in the ancient Scriptures of

other faiths. That is exactly what I ought to expect. If Christ is the light that lighteth every man, I ought to expect to find in the sayings of ancient seers anticipations of the truth as it is in Jesus. The originality of Jesus does not depend upon the absolute novelty of His sayings. The real significance of Christ as a Teacher is not that everything He says is new—as a matter of fact, like the wise and instructed scribe He brought out of His treasury things new and old. The real significance of Christ as a Teacher is this: He brought the scattered fragments of truth together, He set them in their true relation, He gave to each its proper proportion, He taught men the right emphasis, He enabled men, for the first time, to see truth steadily and to see it whole.

I have said as much as this to obviate any difficulty any one may feel on being confronted with parallels to Christ's teaching drawn from the sacred books of the East. It in no way affects the real originality of Jesus. Now, having said as much as that, let me go on to say that the more these so-called coincidences are examined the less like parallels they appear. Certain scholars have compiled an imposing catalogue of coincidences between Buddhism and the Gospel story. If they turned out to be all these scholars say they are, they need not disturb us in the least. They do not prove Christ to be a borrower, for there is not a shred of evidence to show that He ever came into contact with any Buddhist influences. All they would prove is that Buddha got glimpses of the truth, which found their place in the full light of truth as it streamed from Christ. But as a matter of fact, when we come to examine these so-called parallels the difference is seen to be far more striking than the resemblance. So that, as compared with these Eastern

religions, Christ is not only original in the matter of completeness and emphasis and point of view, but He is absolutely fresh and new in the substance and matter of His teaching.

Christ and Judaism.

Now I pass on to discuss for a minute or two our *Lord's relation to Judaism*. Those who refuse to admit Christ's originality on the ground of His indebtedness to Judaism have much more to say for themselves. For the fact of Christ's indebtedness is unmistakable and beyond dispute. Christ was brought up on the Jewish Scriptures. He constantly quotes the Jewish Scriptures. He builds upon the great truths of religion which are set forth in the Jewish Scriptures. Many of the great doctrines He preached are to be found, *in embryo* at any rate, in the Old Testament. Indeed, some go so far as to say that there is absolutely nothing new in the teaching of Christ; and that He added nothing, and never meant to add anything, to the moral and religious teaching contained in the Old Testament. Now, as I hope to be able to show in a moment or two, this is grossly overstated and, indeed, not to put too fine a point on it, is falsely stated. But even if it could be shown that every great word of Christ's had its parallel in the Old Testament, and every great truth He propounded had been anticipated there, I should still maintain that Christ's originality is unchallenged and unchallengeable. We make a vast mistake when we treat *novelty* and *originality* as synonyms. He surely is original who sets an old truth in a new light, and vests it with a new power. Let me take an illustration of what I mean. I suppose, by universal con-

sent, William Shakespeare would be voted the greatest poet England, and perhaps the world, has ever known. Those plays of his are masterpieces of literature. Now, as a matter of fact, nearly all William Shakespeare's plays are based upon stories and legends which he found already in existence. Plutarch, the Italian novelists, the English chronicles—they supplied Shakespeare with his materials. He freely borrowed from them. The *Merchant of Venice*, e. g.—you can find the whole delightful story in the writings of one of the Florentine novelists. And yet no one dreams of denying Shakespeare's originality. He has stamped his own individuality on these old stories. He has made them flash and glow with the light of his own incomparable genius. "He is more original than his originals," says Walter Savage Landor; "he breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life." Shakespeare is full of old material, but is, in spite of it, the greatest and most original poet the world has ever known. And if I may compare little things with great, Christ is original in the same way. Granted that you can find suggestions of some of His great words, and the germs of some of the great truths He preached in the Old Testament; nevertheless, He so breathed His own spirit into them, He so stamped His own individuality upon them, He made them so vivid, and actual and real, that on his lips they became new truths; men felt they had never heard them before; they came home to their hearts and consciences with all the force and power of fresh revelations. "A new teaching!" the crowds exclaimed as they heard Him. "Never man so spake!" That is an element in Christ's originality. He invested old truths with meaning and life and power.

And again, He was original in His *emphasis*. You

know what a difference emphasis can make. It can to all intents and purposes entirely change the character and meaning of a sentence. Well, even if it can be proved that all Christ's doctrines are to be found in the Jewish writings, no one will deny that His emphasis was His own, and by the change He made in emphasis He practically made His religion a brand-new thing. Here is a rather interesting illustration of our Lord's change of emphasis. Some people are fond of saying that the Golden Rule is not Christ's own—that it is really borrowed from a saying of the Rabbi Hillel. Now it is quite true that Hillel used some words very like the words of Christ in the Golden Rule. And it is quite possible Christ may have been familiar with them. But if Christ did borrow Hillel's words, He so changed the emphasis as to make a completely new thing of them. Hillel's saying is negative. He exhorts men not to do to others what they do not wish others to do to them. It is a mere exhortation to refrain from hurt or injury. The selfish man—on purely selfish grounds—could practise Hillel's advice. But Christ's word is a far bigger and nobler thing. It is an exhortation to positive beneficence. It is an appeal to be actively loving and kind. It is a rule only possible to the man who has the love of God in his soul. Almost every word of the Golden Rule is to be found in Hillel's maxim. But Christ's shift of emphasis from the negative to the positive has made a new and infinitely nobler thing of it.

And that will serve to illustrate what Christ did with the doctrines of the Old Testament. He so shifted the emphasis as to make them to all intents and purposes new doctrines. For instance, it is possible that the great truth of the *Fatherhood of God* may

be found in the Old Testament. I am not quite convinced that in Christ's sense it can be found there. But let us concede the point. All the same, the Fatherhood of God is distinctively and peculiarly Christ's doctrine. If it is in the Old Testament at all, it is hidden, overlaid, buried. That was not how the Jews thought of God. They thought of Him as Sovereign and Judge, but never as Father. "Father" is Christ's word. He laid the whole emphasis upon that aspect of God's nature. It flashed upon the world as a new truth, made real for the first time by the stress and emphasis laid on it by Christ. Take again *the doctrine of the Kingdom*. No doubt it is to be found in the Old Testament. But once again Christ shifted the emphasis, so that on His lips it became a truth absolutely fresh and new. The prophets and psalmists in their visions of the Kingdom had dreamed of earthly empire and material pomp and power; Christ laid the emphasis entirely on the moral and spiritual aspects of the Kingdom. He aspired to rule not over leagues of land, but over loving and adoring souls. And once again the change of emphasis transfigured the entire conception, and men felt as they listened that they had never heard of the Kingdom of God before. Take once again the idea of the *Spirituality of Religion*. Of course this truth is to be found in the pages of the prophetic books. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah—they made many an impassioned protest that ritual was not religion. But none ever so emphasized it as Jesus did. It was in the forefront of His witness. He Himself deliberately broke the demands of the Mosaic law in order to bring the truth home to the hearts and consciences of men. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit

and in truth"—in substance it is contained in many a prophetic passage, but practically it is Christ's own truth, made potent and effective for the first time by His witness and teaching.

This change of emphasis made Christ so startlingly new to the multitudes that the thing that struck them most about His teaching was its total difference from the teaching of the scribes. And the difference went far deeper than a mere difference of manner. It was a profound and immeasurable difference of matter. Christ's change of emphasis made the religion He taught a completely new religion. He was no imitator—the crowds felt—but an innovator, an original, a unique. They had never heard or seen it on this fashion, and the crowds were right. The facts simply laugh out of court the suggestion that Christ was a mere compiler and collector of other people's thoughts. He was an original Teacher, and He founded a new Religion. That Christianity is rooted in Judaism does not alter the fact that it is another and a different thing from Judaism. In some respects Christianity and Judaism are at opposite poles: Judaism with its Sovereign God, Christianity with its Father; Judaism with its worldly kingdom, Christianity with its kingdom of souls; Judaism with its emphasis on external ritual, Christianity with its emphasis on the loving heart. And the difference between Judaism and Christianity is just the measure of the originality of the teaching of Christ.

Christ's Insistence on His Own Person.

Now, if everything in Christ's teaching could be shown to have been uttered by somebody else before

it was said by Him, I should still maintain that He was supremely and unchallengeably original. His teaching in its total impression is an absolutely new and different thing from anything that went before it. But though I have but a moment to say it in, let me add this further word—everything in Christ's teaching was not said by somebody else who preceded Him. There are elements in Christ's teaching which you cannot parallel from psalmist or prophet. They are Christ's very own. They are His original contributions to the religious knowledge and spiritual culture of the world. And these elements which you cannot parallel form the real core and kernel of the Christian faith. And chief and foremost among these original contributions is *Christ's own Personality*. For let me repeat again what I have more than once said before from this pulpit—you cannot separate Christ's Person from His teaching. He consistently and persistently preached Himself. His mightiest assertions are assertions about Himself. He proclaimed Himself to be the Giver of Rest to the Soul, the only Way to the Father, the Ransom for Human Sin, the Judge of the quick and the dead. He pressed Himself and His claims upon the consciences of men, and declared that by their attitude to Him men's eternal destinies would be settled. There is nothing anywhere to parallel our Lord's insistence upon Himself. This differentiates His teaching from every other teaching in the world. It sets it in a class all by itself. About Christ's originality in this respect there can be no dispute. But here is the significant fact, it is just this absolutely original element that constitutes the very core of Christianity. Christianity is not simply or primarily an Ethic, it is an Evangel; it is not a morality, it is a Salvation;

it is not assent to a creed, it is devotion to a Person. "To me to live is Christ," said the Apostle Paul. That is Christianity. It is faith in Christ, love to Christ, obedience to Christ, devotion to Christ. Christ was not a philosopher, He was a Saviour. He offered men not a set of rules, but Himself. "Come unto Me," He said, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ was absolutely and entirely original in this faith He had in the power of His own Personality coming into contact with the weak and broken personalities of sinful men. Other teachers gave men laws, rules, maxims which were powerless to redeem. Christ gave Himself, and to multitudes the Man Christ Jesus has been a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, and as the Shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land. In this preaching of Himself, in this insistence on the saving Power of His Divine Personality, Christ has no predecessor. In this, the core of His teaching, the distinctively Christian part of His teaching, He is absolutely original and stands alone.

I end by just saying this—all attempts to detract from the greatness of Christ by trying to minimize or deny His originality are doomed to end in failure. It is absolutely impossible to reduce Christ to the dimensions of a Buddha or a Confucius, or a Hebrew prophet. Those who allow themselves to be impressed by parallel passages are simply in the position of not being able to see the wood for trees. Let a man compare the teaching of Christ *as a whole* with the teachings of Buddha or of Confucius or even of the greatest of Hebrew prophets, and he will be struck not by the likeness, but by the difference, the deep, immeasurable difference. To pass from the one to the other is like a change of worlds.

He will feel here is One absolutely to Himself, solitary, unique, alone. He will say with the multitudes: "A new teaching!" He will declare with these officers: "Never man so spake." And noting this vast and immeasurable difference he will begin to ask himself the reason for it. Why does one Man stand out unapproached, unapproachable in His power over conscience, in His authority over the soul, in His ability to make God real? Why are this man's words charged with Divine light and truth and life, as the words of no other man in all the wide world? And as he meditates upon that question he will perhaps come to this conclusion, that the teaching is unparalleled because the Person is unparalleled. "Never man so spake." No! Man could not speak like this. Only God could speak like this. The words are unique, original, Divine because the speaker is Divine too, the everlasting Son of the Father.

VII

THE VISION AND COMPASSION OF JESUS

"*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.*"—MATT. ix. 36.

THE main verb of my text is that which is translated "He was moved with compassion," and that main verb sets forth the main positive statement of the verse, and to that main statement I intend to devote the greater part of my sermon. In other words, the subject I mean to preach about is that of the "Compassion of Christ." But the grammatical structure of my text makes it quite clear that the compassion was the result of something else. "When He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion"; or, to translate the Greek sentence quite literally, "Having seen . . . He was moved with compassion." The one thing was the consequence of the other. His pity sprang from His perception. His compassion was the result of His vision.

The Vision of Christ.

And that is the first thing about which I wish to speak with you—the *vision of Christ*. It was the condition antecedent of His compassion. "He saw the multitudes." You may tell me there is nothing at all extraordinary about that. Anybody who has two eyes in his head can see a crowd when there is

a crowd to be seen. But can he? That is the very point. If seeing depends simply on the possession of two sound eyes, how is it people see so differently? How is it the very same sights produce such differing impressions? How is it that to Peter Bell "a primrose by the river's brim, a yellow primrose is to him, and it is nothing more," while to Wordsworth the meanest flower that blew had power in it to quicken thoughts that did often lie too deep for tears? How is it that to some people, as Mrs. Barrett Browning puts it, "earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God," while the rest see no gleam of fire in the bush, but simply sit round it and eat blackberries? How is it that when the sun rises some people see just a disc of fire something like a guinea, but a poet-painter like Blake sees an "innumerable company of the heavenly host crying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty'"? Nothing could be shallower or falser than to suggest that what we see depends upon these two eyes of ours, and that, if our eyes are equally good, one will see as much as the other.

Away back in the days of my childhood I can remember a reading lesson entitled "Eyes, and No Eyes," which told of two schoolboys and a country walk they took. And to one the walk had been full of wonders and glories and surprises, while to the other it had been dull and boring because he had seen nothing at all. And long before that writer wrote his sketch Jesus spoke of people who, though they had eyes to see, did not *perceive*.

The fact is, vision is not a faculty of the physical organ of sight solely. What a man sees depends not simply on his eye, but on his mind, his imagination, his heart. A man may have eyes, sound and perfect in

every particular, but unless he has also an imagination and a heart to look out through those eyes, he will not perceive.

Now the secret of our Lord's vision was this: He looked out upon the world with imagination and a perfect sympathy. He not only *saw*, He *perceived*. And that is why, when He *saw* the multitudes, He was "moved with compassion." If it were true that every one blest with two sound eyes saw alike, then the sight of the crowd ought to have produced the same impression upon all who saw it. The twelve disciples were with Jesus at this time; but I do not read that any one of them was "moved with compassion." I read it only of Jesus; and I read it only of Jesus because, in the deepest sense of all, He was the only one who saw the crowd. The rest saw heads, faces, bodies, numbers. Jesus was the only One who truly and really "saw the multitudes."

Now, my brethren, even to the dullest and most prosaic of men there is something impressive, inspiring, subduing in the sight of a great crowd. What preacher is there, for instance, who is not acquainted with the inspiration that comes from numbers? When the multitudes press upon the preacher to hear the word of God, he is uplifted, exalted, clean carried out of himself. And it is possibly this inspiring and encouraging effect of the multitude that is the most familiar effect. In numbers we see power. But to the man who looks out with imagination and sympathy the crowd supplies not only ground for exultation, it supplies also abundant food for tears. You remember the old story of Xerxes reviewing his troops before they crossed the Hellespont to invade Greece. As they marched past in seemingly endless regiments and battalions, the

monarch's first feeling was one of swelling pride. In these numberless thousands of soldiers he saw the evidence and expression of measureless power. Then another feeling seized him. He remembered that of all these multitudes in a hundred years' time there would not be one left, and Xerxes on his throne burst out into a transport of tears. He had seen his multitudes not only in the pomp of their power, but as the prey of death.

And the remembrance that all are doomed to die is not the only thought that stirs one to sadness as one gazes upon a crowd. What disappointments, what sorrows, what heart-breaks a crowd represents! If we only knew everything about one another, what tragedies would be revealed even in this morning's congregation! "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness," the old Book says. And every heart, well-nigh, has its bitterness. Business trouble, blighted affections, bereavement, the sorrow and shame caused by sin—they are represented in every crowd. The vision of it all in its naked horror would be more than flesh and blood could bear. It is in mercy that God has, in part at any rate, veiled it from our eyes. But Jesus "*saw* the multitudes." He saw not only their faces: He saw their hearts. "He knew what was in man," John says. His "kind but seaching glance could scan the very wounds that shame would hide." He walked through life with a vision to which everything was unveiled. That was why, on occasion, He gave way to emotions that startled and amazed the bystanders. "When He drew nigh, He saw the city and wept over it." The bursting of Jerusalem on the view was for most pilgrims an occasion for rejoicing and shouts of gladness. But He, when He saw the city, wept over it. The fact

was, He was the only one who *saw* the city. The others saw Jerusalem's temple and its palaces. Jesus saw Jerusalem's people and their sin and their tragic doom. He was the only one who wept, because He was the only one who saw. This was one reason why Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He saw, as no one else ever saw, the pain and sin and woe of the world.

And this is why I read in my text that Jesus, "having seen the multitudes, was moved with compassion." His disciples saw the numbers of people who gathered round their Lord, and their feeling was one of elation. In these thronging multitudes they saw new recruits for their Master's cause. A growing army—that was what the disciples saw, and they rejoiced. A multitude of men and women bowed down beneath burdens of care and sorrow and sin—that was what Jesus saw, and He was stirred to a passion of pity for them. "He *saw* the multitudes, and was moved with compassion."

And before I pass on, I want to make this remark: *Vision is still the condition of compassion.* There is a vast amount of apathy and unconcern and callousness in our modern society. I tell you quite frankly, I do not believe that folk could go on living in selfish and wanton luxury, for instance, if they once really saw the need and misery all about them. They are indifferent to the cruel wrongs of life because they do not see them. I admit that there are some people so innately selfish that they do not want to see, and, if they can possibly avoid it, they will not see. They do not want their peace of mind disturbed; they do not want their consciences aroused. They are like that Persian king who would not allow any one in sackcloth to come near his palace for fear he should

be reminded that there was such a thing as death in the world. I read an American novel last year entitled *V.V.'s Eyes*. It was about a girl who did not know, and for a long time did not want to know, anything about the condition of those whose labour it was procured her her comfort and her wealth. There *are* some hard and selfish natures, let us admit it, who simply do not want to see or know. But there are multitudes more who are indifferent and unconcerned just because they are ignorant. They have never seen the multitude, and so they go on their way heedless and uncaring. What we need in order to stir us up to service and sacrifice and something of our Lord's redeeming passion is *a clarified vision*. We want to *see* the multitude. I said a moment ago that it is in mercy that God has drawn a veil over our eyes so that we cannot see all the ghastly tragedy of human souls. And yet I want to go on now to say that the more we see, the more we seek to see, the more like Christ we become. It is a painful knowledge, I am aware. But the Christian is one who enters into "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings." He is one who is willing to share Christ's sorrows. Therefore, if we are really anxious to be like Christ, we shall make it our business to try to *see*. We shall bring ourselves face to face with the tragic facts of life. When we see men we shall think of the burdens, cares and sorrows they carry. We shall train ourselves to see the multitudes as Christ saw them. We shall think not only of their circumstances, but also of their souls. And seeing them so—seeing them in their want and need and sin—we too, like Jesus, shall be "moved with compassion," and that compassion in turn will inspire us with our Lord's passion for service.

A clarified vision is the condition of an enlarged compassion.

The Compassion of Christ.

And now, having spoken of the vision, let me speak of the *compassion* which issued from it. "When He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion." That word *compassion* is a rich and beautiful word, and it exactly describes the feelings of Christ when He beheld the multitude. It derives from the Latin, and is compounded of two words which mean literally "suffering with." And that is exactly what Jesus did when He came across need and distress and pain. "He suffered with" them. He felt the distress and pain as if it were His own. In all their afflictions He was afflicted. He bore their griefs and carried their sorrows. He "suffered with" all sufferers.

Now there is a sort of "sweet monotony," as Dr. Kilpatrick says, in the way in which this grace of compassion is attributed to Christ in the gospels. He had a perfect passion for helping, healing, saving. There was not a single ill under which men suffered that Jesus did not "suffer with" them. Three things especially called out Christ's compassion. I mention them in their ascending order: (1) Physical need; (2) Pain and sorrow; (3) The ruin and havoc caused by sin. The sight of these things always "moved Him to compassion."

(1) He was moved with compassion for *physical want and need.* "I have compassion on the multitude," He said one day, "because they continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat." The sight of the world's poor always stirred our Lord's

soul to pity. He Himself knew, I imagine, the pinch of poverty. There had not been much to spare in the little home at Nazareth. And He had Himself endured the pangs of hunger. Our Lord was always "moved with compassion" at the sight of fainting and famished people. I need not protest to you, that Christ's primary business is with man's soul. He came to seek and to save the lost. He was essentially and principally not a social reformer, but a Saviour. But I should be giving a totally false impression of our Lord if I implied or allowed you to infer that He had no concern for the bodies of men. Christ cared not only for men's spiritual condition, but also for the external circumstances under which they lived. He came to preach good tidings to the poor. His own heart was stirred to its depths by the sight of need. And His sternest warnings were addressed to men who, like Dives, neglected the poor who were at their gates. The Christian is bound, like his Lord, "to consider the poor." To reduce Christianity to a sort of programme of social reform is a grave error on the one side; but to say it has nothing to do with social reform is to be guilty of as grave an error on the other. *The poor are our concern.* The fact that millions of our own countrymen are living on the poverty line—that is our concern. The fact that children grow up in our midst who are sent forth into life crippled and maimed because not adequately fed and clothed—that is our concern. The fact that there are people so badly paid for their labour that they cannot marry, or if they marry, cannot maintain their families in decency—that is our concern. The wrongs of the poor touched the fountains of Christ's pity. We are no followers of His unless the vision

of those same wrongs stirs us up also to compassion. And Christianity itself is a make-believe unless, wherever it is professed, it means good tidings to the poor.

(2) Our Lord was "moved with compassion" by the vision of *pain and sorrow*. He "suffered with" every sufferer. It was from this infinite compassion of His for pain and suffering that nearly all His deeds of power sprang. His miracles were the product of His pity. A leper came to Him and besought Him to set him free from his loathsome disease, and Jesus, "moved with compassion," stretched forth His hand and said, "I will, be thou clean."

Two men sat by the wayside at Jericho begging. The crowd tried to silence them when they began to cry out to Jesus for healing. But He commanded them to be brought, and "moved with compassion" for these men who were shut out from the vision of God's fair earth and the sight of their own beloved, He touched their eyes, and straightway they received their sight.

He was walking into Nain one day, and at the gate He met a funeral. It was the funeral of a young man who was the only son of his mother, and she a widow! It was a common enough sight, I dare say. But the pathos of it all touched our Lord's heart. He "suffered with" that weeping mother. When the Lord saw her He "had compassion" on her and said unto her, "Weep not," and He came nigh and touched the bier and said, "Young man, I say unto thee, 'Arise,' and he that was dead rose up, and He gave him to his mother."

Our Lord was moved with compassion for the poor; He was stirred to a still profounder pity for

the suffering and the sorrow-stricken. Pain and loss are more tragic evils even than poverty, and our Lord was always quick to minister to them. And whosoever would be a Christian must be like his Lord in this respect—he must have compassion on every wounded man he comes across along life's way. And he must be on the look-out for the wounded man too. The world is full of grief and loss. Do you constrain yourselves sometimes to think of it? We see the halt and the lame and the blind in our streets; do you feel the throb of sympathy when you pass them, and does your sympathy sometimes prompt you to say a kind word? We have our hospitals and homes in every town. Do you ever think of the sufferers who lie on the beds and fill the wards? Do you ever think of the men lying there weak and helpless, unable to win bread for their families? Do you ever think of the mothers lying there, separated from their children? Do you ever think of the little children lying there cut off from the frolic and play of childhood? What burdens these people carry! Is your heart ever moved with compassion as you think of them? Occasionally as you go about your daily business you meet a funeral. Does the sight of one ever melt you to tears? Do you ever think of the desolate hearts in the carriages as they pass? We live in a world of bleeding and broken hearts; and while, perhaps, compassion cannot heal disease, or snatch the prey from the jaws of death, for bleeding and broken hearts it is a sovereign balm. If we want to imitate Christ, that is the first thing we must do—we must put on a "heart of compassion."

(3) And thirdly, our Lord was "moved with compassion" by the vision of the *havoc and ruin wrought*

by sin. That was what stirred Him to such a passion of pity as He looked forth on the multitudes referred to in my text. It is quite possible that the majority of them belonged to the peasant class. But it was not the thought of their poverty that so deeply moved Christ. And it was not that there were many sick in the crowd. It was the ordinary, everyday, normal sort of multitude. What moved Christ with compassion was their moral condition. They were like sheep not having a shepherd. They had wandered away from the pastures and got lost. And once deprived of the shepherd's oversight and care, they had become exposed to all sorts of perils and disasters. They were "distressed and scattered." That was the vision Christ had of this multitude. To the everyday onlooker they were just a crowd of average, respectable, decent men and women. Jesus, who knew what was in man, saw them as distressed and scattered sheep.

They were "distressed." The English word does not adequately convey the force of the Greek word which it translates. The Greek word means literally "flayed, torn, mangled." What usually happened to a sheep that got astray was that it fell a prey to prowling beasts who tore and mangled it. And that was how Jesus beheld the people in this crowd —they were flayed, torn, mangled by sin. "The devil goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," says St. Peter. And the souls of these people had been among the lions. They bore the marks of the lions' claws and teeth upon them. They were lacerated, flayed, torn. They were full of wounds and bruises and festering sores. Upon their honour, their truth, their purity, their good name the lion had laid his claws. And from

many a wounded spirit the cry was going up to God, "Save me from the lion's mouth."

And they were not only "flayed and torn," but "scattered" too. And again that word "scattered" scarcely does justice to the Greek. Literally the word means "thrown down," "prostrate," either through faintness or famine. It is a picture of a sheep at the last gasp—unable to rise for weakness. And that again is how Jesus beheld the people in the crowd—trampled down, prostrate, unable to rise—"sick and helpless, and ready to die." For that again is what sin does to men—it not only tears and mangles men, it tramples on them. It reduces them to helplessness and despair. It robs them of the power to rise. Sin means disablement as well as disfigurement. And the disablement, unless rescue comes, is bound to end in death. The prostrate sheep is bound to be the wild beast's prey. And that is how Jesus saw the people—torn and prostrate, disfigured and disabled, and in consequent danger of death through sin. "And when He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion because they were mangled and prostrate, as sheep not having a shepherd."

Nothing moved Christ to such pity as the vision of sin. Poverty and pain, in our Lord's view, were not to be nearly so much dreaded as sin. The power for mischief of poverty and pain is limited; sin's power for evil seems infinite and eternal. Poverty and pain for the most part affect the body; but sin menaces the immortal soul. Therefore, primarily, Jesus Christ came into the world to save His people from their sins. He came to rescue those people, who had been drawn aside by their own lusts and enticed. And because He could not rescue them in any easier way, He gave Himself to the wild

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beasts. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He allowed sin's claws and fangs to fall on Him that the poor, flayed and prostrate sheep might escape. "The Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep."

And whoso would be a Christian must, like his Lord, be "moved with compassion" at the sight of the havoc and ruin wrought by sin. But here comes in one of the most astonishing facts of the modern situation: men and women have become sensitive about poverty and pain, but careless and indifferent about sin. They are more affected by sickness of body than they are by sickness of soul. Philanthropy has become more fashionable than religion. People give far more readily and easily to hospitals than they do to missions. The reason for this is that they do not see the multitudes as Jesus saw them. They see the external mischief, they do not see the deadly secret hurt. And that is what we want for a revival of our evangelic zeal, for a recovery of the lost "passion for souls"—we want to see the people as Jesus saw them. If we saw the people in foreign lands as Jesus saw them, if we saw the indifferent and godless multitude at home as Jesus saw them, we should see them as lost sheep, mangled and prostrate sheep, sheep at the very point of death. For that is exactly what they are: sin rends and tears and defiles and destroys the soul. We are callous and indifferent and unconcerned just because we do not see. You remember the lines F. W. H. Myers puts into St. Paul's lips? He is describing the people to whom he preached—

"Only like souls I see the folk thereunder,
Bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings,
Hearing their one hope with an empty wonder,
Sadly contented with a show of things.

Then with a rush the intolerable craving
Shivers throughout me like a trumpet call,
Oh, to save these, to perish for their saving,
Die for their life, be offered for them all."

And if we *saw*, we too should share with Christ the work of seeking the lost, and should be willing to become all things to all men, if we could by all means save some.

VIII

IN ANOTHER FORM

"*And after these things He was manifested in another form unto two of them, as they walked, on their way into the country.*"—MARK xvi. 12.

IT seems to be the fairly unanimous verdict of scholars that Mark's own work, in this Gospel which bears his name, finished with the end of verse eight. The difference in style between the body of the Gospel and the concluding twelve verses is so great as to shut us up to the conclusion that the closing paragraph comes from another pen. And yet if there is one thing absolutely sure it is this, that Mark did not intend to finish at verse eight. It is not a finish at all. In the Greek the verse ends with a conjunction. There is a legend that the late Duke of Devonshire—who was always very careless, not to say contemptuous of form—once finished a speech in the House of Lords with the word "and," as if he intended to have said something more and then thought better of it. But it is quite inconceivable that a writer should deliberately allow a book to tail off in that way. I look at verse eight ending with a conjunction, and though I cannot deny that that is the finish of Mark's writing, I am absolutely certain that is not the finish he intended.

This abrupt and sudden break-off of Mark's writing can only be accounted for in one of two ways. Either the ending that Mark himself wrote got lost, or

else death overtook him while he was actually engaged at his task. It is not every one who, like the Venerable Bede, is able to sing the *Benedictus* at his passing because God has given him time and strength to complete his appointed task. Some men are cut down in mid-career. After Dr. Dale's death they found a MS. on his desk, the MS. of a sermon he was preparing for Carr's Lane, with its last sentence, the last words he ever wrote, broken off in the middle. It ran like this: "Unworldliness is created by the power of the great hope, the full assurance, that after our mortal years are spent there is a larger, fuller, richer life in——" And there the writing abruptly stopped. The illness that ended his life seized him just at that point. And it may have been, of course, that death suddenly overtook Mark, and so his Gospel abruptly finished with a conjunction, just as death seized Dr. Dale, so that his last sentence ended with a preposition. Anyhow, whichever of the two explanations we adopt, it is practically certain that Mark's own writing came to an end with the finish of verse eight.

The concluding twelve verses are from another pen, and were added to round off what was obviously an incomplete Gospel. The announcement of the Resurrection by the angel to the women was not the end. Christ showed Himself alive to His disciples by many infallible proofs after His Passion. And the unknown writer who undertook to supply a "finish" to Mark's Gospel did so by supplying a list of the more important of Christ's Resurrection appearances. I use the word "list" advisedly, for it is little more than a bald catalogue. There is about it none of the vividness of Mark's narrative style. It gives only in barest outline what Mark himself would perhaps have

given in more detail and at greater length. But it served its purpose, it furnished the Gospel with a satisfactory finish.

Amongst the "appearances" of our Lord which the writer of this paragraph notes was the appearance to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. And the mode in which he records it justifies my description of this closing paragraph as a "catalogue." In St. Luke's Gospel the account of this appearance occupies about twenty verses, and constitutes one of the most exquisite of the Gospel stories, a story which is an exhaustless spring of instruction and delight. But the writer of this paragraph compresses it all into two verses, and is content with recording the bare fact that Christ did so appear to two of His disciples as they walked into the country. And yet this dry, prosaic, matter-of-fact record contains, at any rate, one little phrase which is full of suggestiveness. "The stones thereof are the place of sapphires, and it hath dust of gold," says the writer of the book of Job. That is magnificently true of the Bible. There are gems of truth to be discovered in what look like sterile and unpromising places. "Its stones are the place of sapphires." And so in this bald assertion of Christ's appearance to Cleopas and his friend I have found, at any rate, one phrase which is rich in suggestion. It is this: "He was manifested in another form," or, as it would be more correctly translated, "in a different form." It is to that phrase and what it suggests I would like to call your attention for a few minutes further.

The Difference in Christ.

Now this little phrase calls attention to one characteristic of our Risen Lord. His Resurrection had made a difference in Him. A mighty change had passed over Him. There was as much difference between the Jesus who went down to the grave and the Jesus who came up again from it as there was between the Jesus of the common day and the transfigured Jesus of the Holy Mount. He was manifested *in a different form*. He had a "form" still, but it was not the "form" to which the disciples had been accustomed. He had not altered a bit in spirit and temper and disposition. His exaltation made no difference to His love. All this is quite obvious from what He said and did in the course of the great Forty Days. For instance, in the days of His flesh, He could not look upon the distress and sorrow of people without wishing to help them. Oftentimes it was not the distressed who asked for His help, it was He Himself who proffered it. He was the same after His Resurrection as before in that respect, for when He saw Mary sobbing her heart out at the tomb He could not resist speeding to her comfort and help. "Mary!" He said, and by that mere word transfigured her sorrow into triumph.

He never could look even upon physical want in the days of His earthly ministry without wishing to minister to it. "I have compassion on the multitude," He said, "because they have been with me three days and have nothing to eat." And so He provided for them that bountiful meal out in the wilderness. And in just the same way His heart was moved with sympathy for those men who had toiled all night and

caught nothing, and who were drawing near to the shore disappointed and weary and hungry. And so, when they stepped out, they found a fire of coals burning, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

He was specially pitiful during the days of His ministry to those who had sin on their soul. He was eager, above all things, to lift that heavy load of guilt, and so bring peace to the troubled conscience. He came, He said, not to call the righteous, but sinners. He said to the paralytic, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee," and to the woman who was a sinner, who was sobbing out her shame at His feet, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." And so exactly, after His Resurrection, He was quick and eager to bring peace to the soul of that disciple who had lived in an agony of remorse and shame ever since His denial in the Judgment Hall. His first message was to him, and it was a message that conveyed the assurance of pardon and abiding love, "Go, tell His disciples and *Peter!*"

There was no change in the spirit and disposition of the Risen Lord. What He had been when He was a man amongst men, He was still, though declared to be the Son of God with power. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever."

And not only was He the same in spirit and temper, but even in His little personal ways. I am not going to etherealize Jesus, to de-personalize Him; so to spiritualize Him as to spiritualize Him clean away. Personality abides, and Jesus was a Person, and even beyond death He retained His little personal habits and ways. Mary knew Him by His voice. There was no mistaking the tones of that "Mary!" He was known by those two disciples in the "breaking of bread." He had a certain beautiful way of blessing

the simplest food—"saying grace," as we should put it. And the disciples recognized Him by that. Habits are really the expression of character. The tone of the Lord's voice was the expression of the love of His heart. The "breaking of bread" was the outward and visible sign of His close and holy fellowship with the Father. And character and personality abide. In these deep things, the things which matter, Christ was unchanged,—the same Jesus! That, indeed, is our confidence and our rejoicing, that our Lord is essentially the same in His pity and love and redeeming grace, and is as willing to receive and befriend broken and sinful men as He was in the days of His earthly sojourn—"the same Jesus!"

And yet He was different! Not in essential things, but in outward guise. That is as unmistakably proved by the Resurrection stories as the fact that He was essentially the same! There is one striking and significant fact about the record of our Lord's Resurrection appearances. *Scarcely any of those to whom He revealed Himself recognized Him at the first.* Recall just in a sentence or two what the Gospels tell us. When He appeared to Mary, she did not recognize Him, but took Him to be the gardener. When He appeared to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, they walked the whole distance to the village without even guessing who He was. When He showed Himself to the Eleven on the first Easter evening—not until He had shown them His hands and His side did they come to realize it was their beloved Lord. When He appeared to the five disciples fishing on the lake, they seem to have taken Him just for a passing traveller. It was only when their nets enclosed a great multitude of fishes that the truth flashed upon John's soul, and he said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

When He appeared to about five hundred brethren at once, on that familiar mountain in Galilee, the mount on which He had preached the great Sermon, the mount to which He was accustomed to retire and pray, He was so different that not all who saw Him believed that He was the Jesus of the seamless robe. Most of them fell down before Him in lowly and adoring worship, but some doubted. These are the facts. Resurrection had made a difference in Christ. He was so altered in appearance as to be not easily recognizable. He was manifested "in another form."

Christ, you will notice, even after His Resurrection was no disembodied spirit. He had a "form," though it was a "form" of a different kind. It is indeed questionable whether a self, a personality, can exist without a "body." For the "body" is simply the means of self-manifestation. Sir Oliver Lodge goes so far as to say that "this dependence of the spiritual on a vehicle for manifestation is not likely to be a purely temporary condition; it is probably a sign or sample of something which has an eternal significance, a representation of some permanent truth." That is to say, spirit, according to Sir Oliver Lodge, will always express itself in some sort of "form." And so the Risen Lord had a "form." While He was a man amongst men He had a "form" suitable to the conditions of time and space under which He lived. But when He passed into the spiritual world (as He did at His Resurrection) He had a "form" of another kind, suited to the new conditions of the heavenly life. As to the precise nature of Christ's Resurrection body it is idle for us to speculate. We can see that it was not subject to the laws of time and space, but all beyond that is mysterious. These three things only we know for certain. He had a "form":

it was different; and yet, at any rate to loving eyes, recognizable.

Now do you not think all this throws some light upon the condition of the blessed dead? We have a pathetic yearning to know how it fares with those who have passed within the veil. Well, as I study what these records have to say about the Risen Christ, two or three things begin to shine bright and clear out of the darkness. First of all, we learn that there are some things which death cannot change and which it does not touch. It cannot touch personality; it cannot change character. We shall be essentially the same people on the other side the grave as we are on this. Life is continuous. We shall retain our identity. You will remain you; I shall remain I. And we shall retain into eternity, as Jesus did, the love and affection we cherished here on earth.

And secondly, in that eternal life we shall have a "form." Basing myself on Christ's Resurrection appearances, as well as on the imperious demands of the human heart, I venture to assert that heaven is not a land of disembodied spirits. It is not a place of ghosts. We are not merged in one vast ocean of being, lost in the "All." We remain separate and distinct individuals. That is the great truth safeguarded by the New Testament doctrine of the "resurrection of the body." The New Testament does not teach that the material particles of this body shall rise again. The body that is, is not the body that shall be. But every soul has a "body," a "form." Without some such instrument of expression and limitation, personality in any real sense ceases to exist. And to this doctrine that even in the spiritual world every soul has a "form," science, according to Sir Oliver Lodge, has no objection to offer.

Thirdly, while we shall have a "form," it will be a "different form" from the one we now possess. We shall then possess a "form" which shall be a fitting sheath for the soul, which shall be, so to speak, the visible expression of the soul—but which shall be recognizable as *our* body. What is the nature of the connection between that "spiritual body" and our present material body it is impossible to tell. Whether it is that the soul has the power of creating its own body; whether, as a matter of fact, we are now, by the lives we live, creating these spiritual bodies which will show themselves when the present earthly body is cast aside, no one can say. That is one of the secrets God has kept within His own authority; all we know is that we shall have a "different" body, a fit instrument for that heavenly life in which the limitations of time no longer obtain, a body that shall be like unto the body of His glory. As St. Paul puts it in that glorious series of contrasts: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." We shall be manifested in the life eternal in a "different form."

And lastly the "form," though different, is recognizable to those who love. The disciples, though they did not know Christ all at once, recognized, in spite of that altered form, their beloved Lord. And those who loved Him best were the quickest so to recognize Him. And it is a perfectly legitimate inference from this to assert that there will be recognition in the heavenly life. Sir Oliver Lodge—if I may refer to him once again—argues that *friends* will recognize one another in the spiritual life. Well, that is exactly what the human soul hungers for. The desire for

reunion, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll said the other day, is one of the inextinguishable springs of the human belief in a life beyond. The human soul cries out for its loved and lost. It hungers to clasp again to its heart father, mother, husband, wife and little child.

"Oh, but to find my Love again after the years are done,
And we both are safely dead and awake, with the new life stretching abroad,
For can She be She or can I be I, dear Lord, if we are not one?
Lest the sun grow dark, and there be no heaven, hold fast to thy laws, O God."

Yes, the sun would grow dark and there would be no heaven if we could not meet and know one another in the life beyond. But when we fret ourselves about the question of recognition we worry ourselves with needless fears. We shall have "different" forms it is true. But our identity will not be lost. Just as those disciples recognized their glorified Lord, so shall we—only with clearer vision because ourselves released from the limitations of the flesh—recognize and greet our dear and blessed dead when we rejoin them in the Father's home of many mansions.

Different in form, but the same in character, changed in appearance, but the same in spirit; recognized by them who loved Him—such was the Risen Lord; and such shall also those of us be who attain to the Resurrection of the just.

The Continually Changing Christ.

And now I invite your attention to another thought which this phrase suggests to me. It not only throws light upon the condition of our loved and lost, but it seems to me to represent an abiding feature in the ministry of Christ. Is He not continually appearing

to men in "another form"? The ancient Greeks had a legend about an old man of the sea called Proteus, according to which Proteus had the power of appearing in no end of different shapes and disguises. People used to wish to consult him because he was supposed to have the power of prophecy. But now Proteus would appear as a fish, and now as a horse, and now as a swine, and so on. And those who did not know his secret were apt to miss him, but those who held on to him, no matter what guise he assumed, were always rewarded because to them Proteus would at length reveal himself in his true shape and tell them what they wanted to know. Well, that is simply legend. But in what the Greeks used to say of the fabled Proteus there is a suggestion of what really occurs in the case of our Lord Jesus. He comes to men in "different forms." He does not walk the earth to-day in visible presence. Nevertheless, He has not left it. He is with us always to the end of the world, only to-day He is with us in a "different form."

He comes to us to-day in the *person of His Spirit.* The Spirit pleads with men to-day by the voice of conscience, by the influence of holy parents, by the words of this old Book, by the appeals of the Christian preacher. And when the conscience is stirred and the heart is touched, Christ has come to our house as surely as He went to Zaccheus' long ago, and He is calling us as clearly as He called Matthew from his toll booth saying to him "Follow Me." It is the same Lord—only He has appeared to us "in a different form."

And looked at from another point of view, He comes to us in the *varied experiences of life.* He comes to us sometimes in the shape of a great joy. He has come into many a home, for instance, with

the coming of a little child. And He comes to us sometimes, perhaps oftener, in the shape of a great sorrow. The loss of husband or wife or child—that is a way Christ has of coming. We sometimes fail to realize that coming thus it is the Guest beloved we entertain. But it is still He, only in "another form." And then once more, looked at again from a slightly different angle, Christ comes to us *in the shape of His people*. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Saul had been hauling off humble men and women and casting them into prison, and, all unthinking, he had been doing over again what the priests and the soldiers had done to Jesus. He had been persecuting *Him*, scourging *Him*, crucifying *Him* afresh. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," said the voice to him. Jesus was on earth still in the persons of His persecuted and suffering people. And He presents Himself to us in the same guise still. No! He does not come to us as we see Him in pictures, a drooping figure with the Cross upon His back, and He does not come to us, as others picture Him, a glorious and radiant figure with the crown upon His head. "Jesus, these eyes have never seen that radiant form of Thine." But He comes still! He comes in the shape of that lowly person who needs friendship, or that bereaved person who needs comfort, or that discouraged person who needs a word of cheer. He comes in the shape of the sick who need healing, and the weak who need help, and the hungry who cry for bread. That is the "different form" in which Christ presents Himself to the men and women of to-day. And the tragedy of life is to miss Him when He comes. "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or athirst and gave Thee drink? And when saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in? or naked and clothed Thee?

And when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?" And the King shall answer and say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me."

Changing Conceptions of Christ.

"In another form." And does not the little phrase suggest that different people may get different views of Christ? There is no definite, stereotyped, unalterable conception of Christ. You cannot find that even in the New Testament. I question sometimes whether Christ is absolutely the same to any two people. You know how various and different are the faces of Christ which artists put upon their canvases. There are no two pictures of Christ the same. The fact is, each artist depicts his own Christ, the Christ of his own imagination and affection—Christ as He appears to him. And He appears to no two in exactly the same form. Well, the difference in the artistic representations of Christ are but symbolic of the differences in men's thoughts about Him. There are differences, as I have said, even in the New Testament pictures of Him. Peter's Christ and John's Christ and Paul's Christ—they are all at bottom the same Christ, the Christ who loved men's souls and died for their sins and rose again in triumph on the third day. But in each Apostolic picture there is a difference in the point of view. He appears to James perhaps mainly as the Lord of Conduct, and to John as the Illumination of the soul, and to Paul as the Mighty Saviour from sin. Christ is so big that He is all these things. But each Apostle emphasized the aspect of Christ that specially appealed to him, and He appeared to each in

slightly "different form." Now sometimes we are half disposed to regret this. Change and difference rather trouble and distress us. We wish there had been some definite and authoritative conception of Christ which all could accept and believe in. But as a matter of fact it is infinitely better as it is. The fact that Christ can and does manifest Himself in different forms gives us a Christ for every stage of life's journey. I do not think we ought to expect Christ to appear in exactly the same form to the high-minded youth as to the man on whom life has left its defiling stain. The youth whose life is as yet untarnished will delight to think of Jesus as the great Captain of Salvation, summoning him to blameless war, the man in years will think of Christ as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. The great Captain of our Salvation, the Lamb of God, the Moral Ideal, the Giver of Rest, they are all the "same Jesus," but He comes to men at the varying stages of life in "different forms."

I do not think we ought even to expect all men to construe the person of Christ in exactly the same way. Augustine, saved from a life of sensuality and sin, will emphasize Christ's redeeming love; a man like Emerson, who kept through life an almost blameless soul, will think of Him mainly as the Revelation of God's love and life. But He is the same Jesus! Just because He is so rich and full, He appears to the infinite varieties of men in different forms according to their several needs, and is able to meet the wants of all.

And as it has been with individuals, so has it been with the ages. Every age needs a new Christ and finds a new Christ. As the years pass, men grow in knowledge. And as they grow in knowledge, old

intellectual statements become obsolete and impossible. And so we must expect views of Christ to alter. They have altered! But we need not fear that Christ is going to be superseded or discarded. There is such infinite fulness in Him that every age finds its satisfaction in Him. He appears to every new age as it is born "in another form."

And yet the same Jesus! Amid the almost infinite changes essentially the same! We probably should not speak of Him to-day exactly in the way Augustine or Luther or John Wesley spoke of Him. And yet, with all our altered interpretations, Jesus is the same to us as He was to them, the Revelation of God and the Redeemer from sin, the Light of the world and the Lamb of God. These are the things that make Christ Christ to us, and in these He does not change.

I notice one mark which Christ carried with Him from the days of His flesh into His Resurrection life. He carried the "nail prints." When the disciples were, as John Bunyan would say, "in a maze," unable to believe their visitor was the same Jesus, so mighty was the change which Resurrection had made in His form, this was how He persuaded them it was He Himself,—"He showed them His hands and His side." He bore the marks of His dying love upon Him. That was how they knew Him—just as they knew Livingstone's body when it was brought back to England by the false joint in the arm where the lion had crunched the bone. That is Christ's mark. "Show me the nail prints," said an old saint to a being who presented himself to him in his cell claiming to be the Christ. That is the test. A Christ without the nail prints is not the real Christ. A Jesus without His Cross is not the real Jesus. But He carries the marks still.

"Hath He marks to lead me to Him,
If He be my Guide?
In His feet and hands are wound-prints,
And His side.'"

He is the same Jesus who loved us to the uttermost, who died to take away our sin, who came to seek and to save the lost. When on the second Easter Sabbath Jesus appeared again to the disciples, and addressing Himself to Thomas invited him to put his finger on the print of the nails, that doubting but devoted disciple, realizing that He was "the same Jesus," fell at His feet and cried, "My Lord and my God." And when we realize the same blessed fact, that the risen Lord is the same Jesus—receiving Sinners and saving to the uttermost—shall we not make Thomas's great confession our own?

IX

AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM

"*As without law . . . but under law to Christ.*"—1 Cor. ix. 21.

That was what his conversion had done for Paul —it had emancipated him from the bondage and burden of the law. Up to the time of that never-to-be-forgotten experience of his on the way to Damascus Paul had been scrupulous in his obedience to the commands of the Mosaic law. He says himself that as touching the righteousness which was in the law he was found blameless. He was precise and particular in his performance of every rite and ceremony ordered by it. Christ had said of the Mosaic law, and the additions which Jewish tradition had added to it, that it was a burden too heavy to be borne. Paul found it such, as is quite clear from that terrible seventh chapter to the Romans. And yet he went doggedly on with the Sisyphean task of trying to give its commands a complete obedience. But his conversion set him free from the burden and bondage of the law. He realized that in Christ its ceremonial and ritual demands were no longer binding on him. And Paul exulted in his freedom. He rejoiced in his liberty. You remember how that word *freedom* rings through the Apostle's writings: "With freedom did Christ make us free." "Ye were called unto freedom." "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ made us free." Indeed, it is not too much to say that Paul was the great champion of Christian

freedom. He bent all his powers to the task of safeguarding and defending the sacred heritage of *liberty from law* which had been won for all believing souls by Christ. That was his condition ever since Christ had saved him: he was "without law"—outside the range of law. And yet, though he knew himself emancipated from the bondage of the law of Moses, Paul did not think of himself as autonomous and independent. He was "without law" as far as the Mosaic legislation was concerned, but he was "under law to Christ." That is a favourite way the Apostle has of describing himself—"the bond-servant of Jesus Christ," "the slave of Jesus Christ."

What happened on the way to Damascus was this, Paul changed authorities and allegiances. It was not a case of having had a master before and being his own master ever afterwards. What Paul got at Damascus was a new Master. He was still a man under authority, but now the authority was not statutory and legal, it was immediate and personal. His Master now was not Moses, but Christ. "Without law . . . but under law to Christ."

In all this the Apostle is the type of the Christian man. The Christian man is at once gloriously free, and yet he is under authority. He exults in the conscious possession of a blessed liberty, and yet at the same time he knows he is a slave. He is "without law" in the sense that he is lifted clean above all ritual and ceremonial rules, he is lifted above even the standards and maxims of the world; but all the time he is "under law to Christ." He is at one and the same time bond and free. He does not recognize the authority of society, but he bows to the authority of Christ.

Now, as we know, it is extremely difficult for us

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to give the right and exact emphasis to each of two contradictory but really complementary truths. We rush into the falsehood of extremes. We find it very difficult to keep the balance true. Individualism and Socialism are really complementary truths, but they split mankind into opposing camps. Liberalism and Conservatism are really necessary to each other, but most of us are vehemently on one side or the other. And so exactly with this matter of freedom and authority. We find it difficult almost to the point of impossibility to believe in a freedom which is consistent with authority, and an authority which is indispensable to freedom. We hold either to the one or the other.

The Church of Rome, for instance, holds to the principle of authority. The Pope is simply the embodiment of Church authority, and the Pope, by means of bulls and decrees, represses all attempts at free and independent thinking. The treatment of modernists like Father Tyrrell is an illustration of what I mean. The Roman Church insists on authority and denies freedom.

But the danger of Protestantism is just the opposite. Protestantism, to justify itself, had to assert the claims of the individual conscience as against the authority of the Church. It insisted upon freedom, the unshackled mind, the right of private judgment. Protestantism was a challenge to authority and tradition and custom. Luther at Worms saying, "Here stand I; I can do no other, God help me, Amen," asserting the rights of his own redeemed experience against the authority of Pope and Cardinals and Councils, incarnates the spirit of Protestantism. It has stood for freedom, both intellectual and political. The free and progressive

nations have for the most part been Protestant nations, and they owe their freedom and their progressiveness to their faith.

But it is possible that in our Protestant emphasis on freedom we have neglected the complementary principle of authority. For freedom is not the whole story. The Christian man is not only a free man, he is also a slave. He is emancipated from the obligation of obedience to an ecclesiastic, but he is under law to Christ. In Roman Catholic countries it is the truth that where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, that needs emphasizing. But in a country like this, where freedom is a tradition and is in danger of becoming a fetish, it is the other truth that we are under authority, that there is an authority outside of us which we must reverence and obey, that needs insisting upon. For while authority without freedom may end in mental sloth and intellectual death, freedom without respect for authority and an authority to respect will surely degenerate into licence and atomism, and moral and intellectual anarchy.

And is there any one who will deny that we are in danger in this land of ours, and in this present time, on that side of things?

The Anarchic Temper.

As I look out upon England to-day the thing that strikes me as being most menacing to the welfare both of Church and State is the *anarchic and insubordinate* temper of our time. We are rapidly becoming strangers to discipline and obedience and order. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked," and we have kicked over the traces in all directions. We are setting up our own will and judgment against custom

and convention and law. This temper, though much to be deplored, is quite easily accounted for and understood. We have been passing through an age of emancipation, both political and intellectual. In the political world it has been an age of ever-enlarging suffrage, when men have been delivered from old deprivations and tyrannies, and when the rights of man as man to full freedom and privilege have been sedulously and successfully preached. In the intellectual realm it has been an age of revolutionizing change, when ancient landmarks have been removed, and ancient sanctions have been destroyed. The restraints that sobered and disciplined our fathers retain their power no longer. The authority of the Bible, the authority of the Church, the authority of the Christian faith—they have all been challenged and denied.

The bounds of human freedom have in every direction been enormously enlarged. On the whole, this "emancipation age" through which we have been passing has brought benefit to the world. But it has also brought with it great and serious perils. The removal of the ancient authorities by which human life was guided and governed has for multitudes issued in the loss of the sense of authority altogether. The insistent preaching of freedom has made them think that there is no law to be observed, no authority to be reverenced, no master to be obeyed. Liberty is always a perilous boon. Liberty is a great test of character. Liberty in the hands of those who do not know how to use it becomes an instrument for their own hurt. Take Mexico at the present moment as an example. General Diaz's rule may have been dictatorial and more or less of a tyranny. But the efforts at constitutional government with an

undisciplined people have only resulted in confusion worse confounded. And the condition of things in England here is not altogether dissimilar. The disintegration of the old authorities has made people think there is over them no authority at all: the freedom conferred upon them they interpret as a freedom without limit. The consequence is, our people are becoming self-willed, petulant, disordered, undisciplined. They have no sense of that great truth which Burke uttered when he said, "Liberty must always be limited in order to be possessed." The liberty they claim knows no limit. It is essentially insubordinate, subversive and anarchic. It is not "sober" liberty; it is wild, frantic, self-willed liberty which degenerates into licence.

You see evidences of what I mean wherever you look. Take *the home*. We deplore the destruction of the home. We assign all sorts of reasons for it; but I am convinced that one of the reasons for the decay of the home and the upspringing of a generation of careless, frivolous, godless men and women is the lack of home discipline. Parental authority has been left unexercised. Children have not been taught the lesson of obedience from their cradle. They have claimed liberty to do what they liked and go where they pleased. Now if the lesson of obedience is not learned in youth it will never be learned, and if we have children who are self-willed, perverse and insubordinate, we shall soon have a perverse, self-willed and insubordinate people, and that spells in the long run disaster and ruin.

You see the same menacing sign *in our industrial life*. The most portentous development in our recent industrial disturbances has been the repudiation of all authority on the part of some of the workers. They

have struck oftentimes in defiance of their leaders. They have flouted their advice and refused to obey their orders. Now collective bargaining has a good deal to say for itself. In the present stage of things it seems to be about the best method of dealing with our industrial difficulties. But if it is to work effectively there must be discipline and obedience in the ranks. If the men refuse to obey their leaders there is an end to it altogether. If they are to strike when they like and for what they like, if they refuse to stand by the bargains made for them, it means not simply the break up of unionism, it means irreparable injury to the whole fabric of our industrial prosperity.

You see the same thing in our *national life*. There has been of late years a lamentable outbreak of defiance for law and order. People have, as they say, taken the law into their own hands. People who aspire to rule have shown that they do not know how to obey. They have flouted law, they have outraged social order. I am not going to enlarge on this point. Passions are apt to get heated when you get anywhere near events that are happening which have a political colour. But this I will say: the rebellious and insubordinate spirit that defies law and mutters treason and indulges in outrage because it cannot get what it wants, is pregnant with disaster to society altogether. It makes social life impossible. Social life is possible only on the principle of give and take. It implies respect for the will of the whole. It involves a certain curtailment of liberty. People who attack law and social order in order to advance causes of their own are doing what blind Samson did, they are pulling down the pillars on which society rests; and they, as well as their antagonists, will be involved in the ghastly ruin that will ensue.

Moral Anarchy.

But the anarchic spirit of our time reveals itself in its most perilous form in the *realm of morals and religion.* I said a moment ago that the age through which we have been passing has been an age not only of political enfranchisement, but also of intellectual emancipation. The human mind has been set free from its ancient allegiances. The old authorities have been challenged and discredited. And with very many the newly gained liberty has degenerated into dangerous licence. Perhaps I can best illustrate what I mean by referring to the changed attitude towards the Bible. Fifty years ago the Bible was regarded by most Christian people as an infallible book. It was the authoritative declaration of the mind and will of God. Its words were therefore final and binding. That a command was contained in the Bible was sufficient reason for its being obeyed. But the past fifty years have made a great difference in men's views of the Bible. Two things are mainly accountable for the change—the discoveries of science and the literary criticism of the Bible itself. The discoveries of science have shown us that we cannot claim inerrancy and infallibility for the Bible. The work of the critics has cast a certain amount of doubt upon the authenticity of certain parts of the Bible itself. The result is that multitudes of men have repudiated the authority of the Bible altogether. They have "emancipated" themselves, they say, from its tyranny. And then these "emancipated" folk proceed to formulate their own ideas of the whole duty of man. They construct a new morality for us to take the place of the morality

of this old Book. I confess the ideas of this "emancipated" morality are sufficiently alarming. Man's duty, according to the new morality, is not to glorify God, as the old Catechism puts it, but to realize himself. Probe it to the bottom and it is the worship of Egoism writ large. In one aspect of it, it results in Nietzsche's super-man, the man of iron as Bernard Shaw calls him—the man who scorns love as a sentimentality, who hardens his heart and marches to his end heedless of what may happen to his fellows. That means the rule of naked force; it means the acceptance of the maxim that might is right; it means a return to the stage of the tiger and the wolf. It means the perpetuation of the sword. It means ultimately the destruction of civilization altogether.

On another aspect of it, it results in the repudiation of marriage and the break-up of the family. Our modern civilization is built on the family, and the family again is safeguarded by our Lord's austere and holy law of marriage. But now we are told that the whole duty of man is to realize himself, to develop what is in him. And this becomes in the hands of the new moralists practically a plea for the abolition of marriage and the free indulgence of passion. The most deadly menace to our English life at the present time is the stream of prurient, pornographic literature —much of it written by women—which pours out of our press. It apologizes for the adulterer and the seducer and the harlot. It incites to lust and passion by investing them with a glamour they do not possess. It poisons the mind against the restraints of the marriage bond, and makes the love of the family circle the butt of its profane ridicule. That is what it has come to with these people who have emancipated themselves from the authority of this Book.

They know no authority save that of their own brutish lusts and passions. They hanker after the naked animalism of ancient Greece and Rome. They would drag us back into the slime of the stye. They may cover up their propaganda with what graces of style they please, but what they call "liberty" means bestiality and rottenness. And we are blind to all the monitions of history if we do not recognize this: that when a nation or a people begin to practise the morals of Sodom and Gomorrha, the doom of Sodom and Gomorrha will swiftly overtake it.

Religious Anarchy.

And when I turn my gaze from the moral to the religious sphere I find the same state of things prevailing—we are the victims of a sort of religious anarchism. The old religious authorities have been deposed, and no new authority has been instated in their place. We boast of our "freedom of thought." We repudiate both Church and Bible. Every man becomes a sort of law to himself. Every man has a kind of special religion of his own. Every man is his own authority, and makes a god after his own likeness. The result is we have guesses, speculations, queries in abundance, but no authoritative message. And the result again is that the Christian people are hesitant, dubious, bewildered. There is no certitude, no assurance anywhere. And this, again, has issued in weakness and impotence and paralysis. It is always according to our faith, our positive and assured belief, our energy of conviction, that it shall be unto us. We are paying the penalty for our uncertainties and dubieties in our present ineffectiveness. Our vaunted liberty—unlimited as it has been

by any sense of authority—has been our undoing. We have allowed freedom to run riot, and a divided, weakened, paralysed Church—a Church with a lot of pious sentiment and genial feeling, but without an authoritative Gospel—is the result.

The Need for Authority.

Wherever I look, I see this freedom which has become self-willed, atomistic, anarchic. After Austerlitz Napoleon confessed that he could no longer obey. Our age is like Napoleon in that respect. It has forgotten how to obey. It is insubordinate, undisciplined, self-assertive. And its insubordination and repudiation of all authority may carry it over Niagara.

What we need for our preservation is the recovery of the lost *sense of authority*. "The best recipe for making men," says Dr. Forsyth in a striking phrase, "is to give them a master." That is what our age wants—a master. It must learn again how to obey. It must bow again to righteous authority. And if you ask me where I find my authority to which the whole world should bow, the Master whom all the world should obey, I reply that I find Him in Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate and final authority. He is the One who has the right to rule. He is the One whom the universal conscience recognizes as Lord. The Bible is not the ultimate authority. The day is long since passed when we could hope to settle things by the quotation of proof-texts. Not that I have patience or sympathy with those "superior" persons who would consign the Bible to limbo. Clever people discard the Bible, I understand, for the Gospel according to Nietzsche or Bernard Shaw or H. G. Wells. It only shows how amazingly silly clever people can be.

The Bible, in spite of the new moralists, is the one eternal book, it is the authentic word of God to the human soul. And I do not hesitate to say that for a rough-and-ready rule of life, man cannot do much better than live by the precepts of the Bible. The man who makes this old Book his authority will at any rate live a great life, for he will do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God. But the real authority is not the Bible, but the Christ of whom the Bible speaks. And perhaps it has been worth while to have passed through all the distresses of the past fifty years in order to have our notions on authority clarified. Not Moses or David or Isaiah is humanity's Lord, but Christ. Christ you notice—not Jesus the Galilean Prophet; not Jesus the wonderful Teacher. Men feel themselves quite at liberty to criticize Jesus. They sit in judgment on His teaching, and accept and reject what they please. Jesus, whom men feel at liberty to criticize, is no authority—the men who criticize Him erect themselves above Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is the authority—the Divine and Supernatural Christ who has revealed Himself to and verified Himself in the history of the Church—that mighty and redeeming Lord of whom we can be quite sure because He lives amongst us and does His Divine work upon us to this very day. He is the final authority. The Saviour of the soul is the Lord of the soul. The Redeemer of the conscience is Master of the conscience.

Christ is the authority, not conscience. It is a common thing to say that the conscience is the seat of authority. It is not. Conscience is the sphere in which authority is felt. But it is not its source. To make every man's conscience the ultimate court of appeal is to land in atomism and anarchy. The

authority is not exercised by conscience, it is exercised upon it. Authority is not subjective. It is objective and real. It centres in the Historic Christ—the Crucified and Risen Lord, of whose reality we are quite sure. Conscience is wayward and unstable, Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Here is our Authority—whom it is our business not to criticize, but to obey. He is God manifest in the flesh, and in actual experience He has shown Himself able to redeem men's lives into purity and strength, and to give them light and peace. To reverence His authority is the most crying need of to-day. It is the *need of the Church*. We have had enough of guesses and amiable speculations. We have pursued will-o'-the-wisps for long enough. Let us get back to Christ, the exalted, living, Divine Christ. Let us bow to His authority, who has been declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. We have been making our own little Gospels long enough. Let Him give us His, which is the only valid Gospel. We shall soon have an authoritative Gospel which will demonstrate its power in the conversion of souls.

And that is what we need *for the State* as well as the Church—to establish the authority of Christ. He taught them as one having authority, the crowds said of Him in the ancient days. He exercises the same authority still, and every honest soul admits it. And that is what we need to stem the swelling tide of rottenness and corruption; that is what we need to create social order and justice; that is what we need to put an end to strife and warfare; that is what we need to make England a rejoicing and her people a joy—a new reverence for the authority of Christ. An England that casts off restraint, or that

listens to the so-called "new morality" of our modern false prophets, which is not morality at all, but immorality, is on the way to ruin and shame. But an England that enthrones Christ, that bows to Christ, that makes Christ's will its law, shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

And that is what we need as *individuals*. The best recipe for the making of men is to give them a master. And the only One who has a right to be Master is Christ. But He has the right. That is the way to nobility and strength and victory, to make Christ Master—to be under law to Christ. My brethren, have you made Christ Master? Do you acknowledge Christ as Lord? The man who lets his own self-will rule him, who surrenders to his own wandering lusts and passions, shall have a portion of shame and everlasting contempt. But the man who brings every thought into subjection to the law of Christ shall go from strength to strength until he appears before God in Zion. I present Jesus Christ to you—this Divine and Glorified and Living Lord, who has proved His power to redeem and save and sanctify in the experience of innumerable lives, and I say, "Behold your King! Bow the knee to Him! Do homage to Him! Surrender your life to Him! Pay your vows to Him!"

"Thy ransomed servant, I
Restore to Thee Thine own;
And, from this moment, live or die
To serve my God alone."

X

THE RESERVE OF JESUS

"*He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; neither shall anyone hear His voice in the streets.*"—MATT. xii. 19.

MATTHEW'S head and heart were full of the Old Testament. I should hazard the guess that Matthew, like Timothy later, had been well drilled and grounded in the Jewish Scriptures. For verses from the prophets and psalmists are always on the tip of Matthew's tongue, and flow freely from his pen. That, indeed, is one of the chief characteristics of Matthew as an Evangelist—his frequent quotation of Jewish Scripture. What he saw of our Lord's ministry and what he heard of His speech, was constantly reminding Matthew of some great Old Testament word which he had treasured up in his youthful but tenacious memory. Commentators tell us that Matthew in his Gospel has the Jews chiefly in his mind. It was specially for his own countrymen that he wrote. And he introduced, they say, these frequent quotations from the Old Testament in order to remove Jewish prejudice, and to make his readers believe that Jesus answered to the description of Messiah which had already been given by seer and psalmist. There may be, and I dare say there is, an element of truth in this assertion. But it may quite easily be pressed too far, so as to artificialize the Gospel. I do not believe that Matthew set these various verses down as so many "proof-texts." I believe the true account

of them is this—that they represent *what Matthew himself saw in Christ.* Matthew was a great Old Testament student, steeped and saturated in Old Testament lore, and what the Lord did and what He said constantly recalled to Matthew's mind old and familiar verses, and flashed new light upon them. Jesus became to Matthew a sort of key to the Old Testament. He made the crooked place straight and the rough place plain, and gave him the clue to the meaning of many a dark passage. Incidentally, no doubt, these quotations confirmed the faith of many a Jewish Christian, but primarily they represent the impressions made upon Matthew's own soul.

The particular quotation which I have read out as my text was suggested to Matthew by what he saw in connection with Christ's deeds of healing mercy. Our Lord, in order to escape from the malignant opposition of the Pharisees, had withdrawn from the city into some quiet and secluded place. But many of the people who had found in Him such a mighty Helper and Healer followed Him. And our Lord, instead of being angry with them for their intrusion upon His privacy, ministered to them. "He healed them all," says Matthew. But it was what Christ did *after* the healing that seems especially to have struck him. "He charged them that they should not make Him known." He laid an embargo upon their grateful speech. He wanted no advertisement. The Lord wanted to do His good deeds by stealth. It was *this* aspect of our Lord's conduct that arrested Matthew's attention. It was so different from the conduct of the average man. When the ordinary man has done something extraordinary, he likes the world to know it, he wants to receive full credit for it. But Jesus was doing the most amazing things, and He wanted

no fuss about it. "He charged them that they should not make Him known." And as Matthew noticed all this, a verse from Isaiah flashed into his mind, and he remembered how the prophet, speaking of Messiah, had said, "He shall not strive nor cry aloud, neither shall any one hear His voice in the streets."

Now what I want to do is to call your attention to that characteristic of our Lord's ministry which Matthew here notes, and to discover, if I can, the reasons for it. Perhaps we may describe the special characteristic of our Lord's ministry, which is here suggested, as that of quietness and reserve. There was nothing sensational or loud or dramatic in the ministry of Christ. He laid no stress upon the wonders He wrought. He did not want them talked about. Even His speech is calm and measured and sane, with an utter absence of that sort of fervid oratory which is apt to fascinate men and sweep them clean off their feet. Our Lord did not advertise; He did not assert Himself; He never tried to dazzle and astonish the crowds; He made no fuss; He was quiet, restrained, reserved. "He did not strive nor cry aloud, neither did He lift up His voice in the streets."

And He was thus quiet and restrained, though He had it in His power to astonish and overwhelm the world! What a sensational ministry He might have exercised had He wished! "All power is given unto Me," He said, "in heaven and on earth." All power! What tremendous things He could have done had He wished! He could have roused all Palestine to a perfect fever of excitement. He could have turned the world upside down. He could have summoned twelve legions of angels to His aid and swept aside Roman procurators and plotting priests. Nothing in the way of the dramatic and the sensational and the

overpowering was impossible to Him. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth." But He left His power unexercised. He deliberately refrained from the startling and the overwhelming. He was almost a niggard in the matter of miracles. "He did not strive nor cry, neither did He lift up His voice in the streets."

And He was thus quiet and restrained not only in spite of the fact that there were no limits to His power, but in spite of the fact that He was pressed and urged to exercise it. To begin with, He was pressed and urged to exercise it by His own great love and pity for men. Christ came to earth to give men life, and to give it in abundance. He saw men "sick and helpless and ready to die," and for sickness and death He had life and health to give in exchange. He knew He could give eternal life to men if they would only believe in Him and trust Him. And our Lord was pressed and importuned by His very love for men and desire to save them, to win their faith once for all by some overwhelming and startling display of power which should convince them He was Divine. That is the meaning of the second Temptation. You remember how it runs, "Then the devil taketh Him into the holy city; and he set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and on their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest haply Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." Now the point of the Temptation lies here, that the Jews expected the Messiah to come in some such wonderful way. "The Lord shall suddenly come to His Temple," it had been prophesied. If Jesus were suddenly to descend, heaven-borne, into the very midst of priests

and people in the Temple courts, His Messiahship would be at once established. His claim would be acknowledged without demur. A miracle of that kind would be without and beyond challenge. Christ would be able to accomplish His designs for men without having to endure disappointment and delay. But though thus urged to exercise His power by His own love and pity for men, He felt it to be a temptation of the Devil and thrust it aside, saying, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

And He was pressed and urged to an exercise of His power—to a dramatic and sensational exercise of it—not simply by His own redeeming love, but also by the appeals of His friends and the challenges of His foes. His friends urged Him to put His claims beyond cavil or dispute. It distressed them that there should be so many of their fellow-countrymen who doubted those claims; it troubled them even more that Christ should leave any room for doubt. You remember what His brothers said to Jesus when the feast of Tabernacles was drawing near? They urged Him to go up to Jerusalem and declare Himself. "If Thou doest these things," they said, "manifest Thyself unto the world." "Manifest Thyself"—they would have had Jesus settle the question of His Messiahship once for all by a sensational display of power. And our Lord's disciples were of the same mind as His brothers. If they had had their way, they would have settled matters out of hand, even if it were by calling down fire from heaven, as James and John wished to do upon the heads of certain unbelieving Samaritans.

And as our Lord was urged to such a convincing display of His Divine power by His friends, so was He continually challenged to it by His critics and

foes. They were continually asking Him to give them a sign from heaven. Heaven was supposed to be God's own domain. Beelzebub might do signs upon the earth, but he had absolutely no authority over the skies. A "sign from heaven" would, therefore, come with God's hand and seal upon it. And they challenged Him to give such a sign. His works of healing were signs on earth: they might be Beelzebub's work. But a "sign from heaven" could come from God alone, and they challenged Him to give such a sign that should overwhelm all doubt and make belief irresistible. Again and again they challenged Him to say or do something which should put His Messiahship beyond dispute. "How long," they said to Him in Jerusalem at the feast of Dedication, "dost Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly." "I adjure Thee, by the living God," said Caiaphas at His trial, "that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." "If Thou art the Son of God," cried the jeering crowds as they passed in front of His Cross, "come down from the Cross." From His very first appearance as a preacher of the kingdom to the last hours of His mortal life, His foes were continually inviting Him to perform some deed of power that should compel them to believe.

And our Lord consistently and deliberately refused to give them the kind of sign they asked. He declined to give them the irresistible and unchallengeable proof they demanded. He eschewed the loud and the garish and the sensational. He did many a wondrous work, it is true. But He did them so quietly, so unostentatiously that if people chose to doubt and disbelieve they might. The method of His first sign at Cana was the method of His working throughout. Not one of the assembled guests knew that the Lord had

transformed the water into the best wine. The deed was done quietly, without advertisement or fuss. The Lord obeyed His own precept. He did not let His left hand know what His right hand did. It was so throughout. When He raised Jairus' daughter, He drove out the crowd and took with Him only the father and mother of the child and His three disciples; when He healed the leper, He bade him say nothing to any man but go straight and show himself to the priest; when the deaf and dumb man was brought to Him, He took him aside from the multitude privately. That was how Jesus consistently and deliberately acted. He made no parade of His power. He shunned publicity. He avoided the sensational and the startling. He did not strive nor cry nor lift up His voice in the streets. And the result was multitudes hesitated, doubted, disbelieved. You cannot read the Gospels without noticing what a puzzle Christ was to the people. Here is a sample of the discussions that were continually being carried on, "Some of the multitude therefore when they heard these words said, 'This is of a truth the prophet.'" Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "What! doth the Christ come out of Galilee?" Men did not know what to think. Had Christ exercised His power and given them a sign from heaven they might have believed. But instead of displaying His power, He hid it, with the result that a bare hundred men and women really believed in Him as God's Messiah when He came to die.

Reasons for Christ's Reserve.

Now, having stated the fact of Christ's reserve, of His restraint in the use of power, of His deliberate

refusal to give irresistible proofs of His Divinity, let me go on to ask what were the reasons for this reserve. Why was it Christ did not so speak and act as to make any doubt of His Messiahship impossible? Why did He leave any loophole for hesitation or questioning? Why did He not, by some subduing display of power, settle the matter once for all? "How long dost Thou hold us in suspense?" complained the crowd; "if Thou art the Christ tell us plainly." It seems a justifiable complaint. Why was it Christ did not to the very last tell them plainly? Why did He not put His position beyond challenge or dispute? Why is it He pursues the same policy still? For that is how the case stands to this very day. Christ has not so revealed Himself as to remove doubt. He has not placed His Divinity beyond question. There is room for men to cavil and dispute and deny if they will. And men, as we know, do cavil and dispute and deny. We think sometimes it would be a much happier world if Jesus had only supplied that additional little bit of proof that would have turned doubt into certainty and presumption into demonstration. But He has not done it, and He is not doing it. Deliberately Christ seems to leave loopholes for doubt. Why does He do it? Why does He not so reveal Himself as to compel the allegiance of the world? Well, without professing to be able to account entirely for the "hiding of His power," I think I can see reasons why our Lord did not strive nor cry; I think I can see why, indeed, He could not have done otherwise. We think an irresistible sign from heaven would create faith; as a matter of fact, it would make faith impossible.

(1) And the first reason I will mention for our Lord's deliberate and consistent refusal to supply any over-

whelming evidence of His Divine power is this: He had a tremendous *respect and reverence for human personality*. He respected the human will; He respected the human reason; and He would do nothing to impair them. Christ hungered for the love and devotion of men. But it was complete, not maimed and truncated men He wanted. He wanted them to come to Him as free and responsible beings. He wanted to be their Lord by their own free and willing choice. "Come and let us reason together"—that is Christ's appeal. He never seeks to coerce judgment: He persuades and convinces it. Now if Christ had overwhelmed men's minds with some staggering "sign from heaven" He would have paralysed men's judgments and destroyed their freedom. A "sign" that admits of no denial does both these things—it leaves room for neither judgment nor will. An allegiance won by such means would be an allegiance purchased by the destruction of what is noblest in manhood. And that Christ deliberately refused to do. It is man—with his power of judgment and freedom of will—Christ wants to win. And for that very reason He leaves room for the exercise of freedom and judgment. He casts men back upon themselves. He throws upon them the responsibility for their own judgment and choice. It seems inevitable that Christ should have left loopholes for doubt if He wanted to win man in his totality as a thinking and willing being. And that is why I am persuaded the dogmatism of the Church of Rome is so tragically wrong. Father Benson in a lecture he delivered not long ago tried to persuade the folk who gathered to hear him that the future of Christianity lies with the Papal Church. I do not believe it! The very thing about the Church of Rome which Father Benson admires so

much, and which, according to his prophecy, is going to make her the bulwark of religion, is the very thing in which she contradicts the method of the Master. Rome, with her dogmatism and claim to infallibility, denies the rights of the human mind and puts the intellect in chains. She insists upon obedience, unhesitating, implicit, blind. Rome leaves no room for the exercise of the mind and the reason in religion, as men like St. George Mivart and Father Tyrrell discovered to their cost. Rome, with her assurance of certitude, may have a certain attraction for timid and nervous souls—but nevertheless, her method is not Christ's method. He deliberately declined to give that certitude which Rome so glibly promises. He refused any sign from heaven. He left loopholes for doubt. He flung men back upon their own judgments and choices, because what Christ wants is not a man minus his mind, but the complete man—mind as well as heart rendering Him a glad and willing allegiance.

(2) Another reason why Christ did not supply any irrefragable proof of His Divine nature and mission was this:—if the proof of our Lord's Divinity had lain entirely in the region of logic and reason, Christianity would have been a "religion of the wise and prudent." It would, as Mr. Lathom says, be in the keeping of a sort of "hierarchy of culture." But the chief glory of the Christian faith is that it is a Gospel to the poor, that its truths may be grasped by those who in learning are mere babes. Belief in Christ is not a matter of proof at all. If it were, the cultured would be at an advantage. But it is a matter of spiritual apprehension. The organ of vision is not so much the intellect as the heart. And when it comes to heart, the simple are as capable as the cultured,

the poor as favoured as the rich. If Christ had provided proof, He would have put His religion in the keeping of the scholar; but when He left Himself to men's faith and love, He put it in the keeping of the saint.

(3) Christ refused the kind of irresistible proof men asked Him for, *in the interests of real faith*. The people amongst whom Christ lived were always asking Him to work some amazing sign that they "might see and believe"; which, as Mr. Lathom again says, amounts to this: "If we cannot help believing, believe we will." But that would not have been *belief*, in Christ's sense, at all. If they saw some irresistible sign, they might possibly be coerced into accepting certain opinions about Christ. But that is not what Christ means by *faith*. What Christ means by *faith* is not accepting certain opinions as true, but trusting Him, loving Him, committing oneself to Him. If Christ had given them the kind of sign they asked for, they would have been bound to believe possibly that He was Divine—just exactly as we to-day believe that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right-angles. Indeed, the one truth would have been on the same plane with the other. Such a belief in Christ would have been a bit of science and not religion at all, and would have been at the poles from that willing choice of Christ, that reposing of one's trust for time and eternity in Christ which, according to this old Book, is saving faith. The fact is, a compelled, irresistible belief is incompatible with faith. It is faith which saves, according to the New Testament. A man is justified by his faith. He is saved by it, justified by it, because there is a moral element in it. His faith is an index to his soul. And his faith is an index to his soul, just

because it stands for the man's free choice: it is the casting of a man's vote. A belief which a man cannot help has no more moral significance about it than one of Euclid's problems. If a man were constrained and coerced into belief, as the Jews in Christ's day desired, there could have been no *faith*. And just because Christ wanted *faith*, a man's free love, his willing choice—He gave no sign from heaven; He furnished no irrefragable proof. For if there is to be room for a real faith, a real choice, it seems as if there must be left room for doubt. There must be an option. Men must be able to believe or disbelieve. And so our Lord did not strive or cry or lift up His voice in the streets. He did not overwhelm men's minds with sensational and irresistible signs of His Divine Power. He said words and did deeds sufficient to arrest men's attention and to demand their consideration, and He left it there. But He did not coerce belief. Men must themselves choose Him. They must cast their vote for Him. They must themselves make the venture.

And that is why faith becomes a test of character, because it is not a compulsory or inevitable thing, but stands for our own free choice. My brethren, we sometimes wish things were a little clearer and surer, but in the interests of our moral and spiritual life it is best as it is. Indeed, if it had been otherwise it seems sometimes to me that religion, in the sense of a free choice of the soul of what is good and holy, could not exist at all. But as it is—Christ submits Himself for our judgment. And just because we can either believe or disbelieve, what we do with Christ becomes a test of character. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." It is a marvellous sentence. "All power is given unto Me." He could batter and break His way

through if He wished. But that is not Christ's method. He does not coerce nor compel. He pleads, He persuades, He appeals. We can either keep Him out or allow Him in. And just because in the last resort it is all referred to our own choice—that choice reveals our character. For the man of hard and evil heart may find things to cavil at, and occasions for doubting Christ if he will, but the pure in heart will see God in Him, and so will have faith to the saving of their souls.

That is why our Lord did not strive nor cry; that is why He gave no sign from heaven. He wanted not fear, but faith; not a coerced obedience, but a willing love. He said and did enough to persuade men and women of open and guileless soul that He was their Lord and King; but not enough to compel the belief of the evil and unwilling heart. And so Christ becomes the test of character. What we do with Him is our own judgment upon ourselves. Sometimes on paintings the artists will inscribe their names. Sometimes pictures are discovered which bear no names. But if such nameless pictures have come from a master's brush, the connoisseurs are quick to recognize it. They *know the touch*. Christ, when He came, did not claim His high and lofty titles. He did not write His name upon His forehead. He did not compel the belief of everybody. But the men and women of pure soul, they recognized Him. "Thou art the Son of God. Thou art the King of Israel." My brethren, have we recognized Him? Have we seen our Lord and King beneath that seamless robe? Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

XI

THE SANGUINE JESUS

"*He also is a son of Abraham.*"—LUKE xix. 9.

THAT is exactly what Christ's critics had forgotten or perhaps never realized. They grumbled that Christ should ever dream of accepting a publican's hospitality. "He is gone in to lodge," they said indignantly, "with a man that is a sinner." And this is Christ's apology, His defence of His action: "He also is a son of Abraham." If Christ's critics had been asked whose son Zacchaeus was they would have said that he was "the son of perdition, the child of the devil." In their view Zacchaeus had forfeited all rights in God's Israel when he entered the service of the detested Roman government. Jesus' view of Zacchaeus, however, was that he was still a son of Abraham. And I believe that when he said that, He meant more than that Zacchaeus was still a Jew by blood, and that therefore his calling had not cancelled his birthright. That would have been a mere platitude, an obvious truism. I agree with the older commentators like Chrysostom that Christ meant that Zacchaeus was spiritually of Abraham's kith and kin. Our Lord saw something in the little man's soul that convinced Him that he belonged to the spiritual family of the father of the faithful. It is a difference of view you get here—a profound and radical difference of view. The Pharisees thought of Zacchaeus as a bit of sterile and waste ground, Jesus saw in him the possibility

and promise of rich and blessed fruitage; the Pharisees saw nothing but the superficial evil, Jesus saw the potency of good; to the Pharisees he was just a "sinner," to Jesus he was a "son of Abraham." Now I have called your attention to this little phrase not for any light it throws upon the character of Zacchaeus, but for the light it throws upon the character of Jesus. For this judgment of His upon Zacchaeus is, in the strictest sense, characteristic. It is a real index to His nature. It is the *sanguine Christ* we see in a sentence like this. He took the hopeful view of human nature, He believed the best of men. He had an unconquerable confidence in them. He had a superb faith in their essential goodness. And it is this superb faith in man's essential and ultimate goodness that qualifies Jesus to be the Saviour of the world. "We are saved," Paul says, "by hope." And that is true. And the hope that saves is not our own hope, but Christ's hope for us. No one can save or uplift his fellows who starts by despairing of them. It is not in human nature to go on with a work which we know is bound to end in failure. No man will stick to any job if he feels his labour is bound to be all for nought and in vain. If a person thinks that certain people are past praying for, he will certainly, sooner or later, abandon them and leave them to their fate. That is exactly what happened in Palestine. The pious people thought the publicans were past saving, so they left them to their doom. But Jesus had a mighty faith in human nature. He dared to hope even for the worst. And by the fact that He dared to hope for all, He qualified Himself to become the Saviour of all. And of this superb and unconquerable hope you have an illustration in my text. Of this despised, loathed,

outcast publican Jesus said: "He also is a son of Abraham."

I have been led to think of this special aspect of Christ's character through my reading of Mr. J. G. Stevenson's recent book on *Religion and Temperament*. In that book he discusses the relation between temperament and religion—the excellencies and defects of the religious life that are due to temperament. You remember the old philosophers said that there were four temperaments—the phlegmatic, the choleric, the melancholic, and the sanguine. To these Mr. Stevenson adds what he calls the artistic and the practical. And he proceeds to discuss the effect on religious experience of each one of these temperaments. Then in the last chapter he discusses the Temperament of Jesus. He finds in Him all the varied temperaments combined in exactly their true proportions. He has the virtues of them all with none of their defects, so that His becomes the ideal temperament and Christ Himself the perfect man. All this is most admirably said, and with it all I entirely agree. Whatever of good there is in the melancholic and phlegmatic and choleric temperaments existed in Jesus. He had the sense of tragedy which is the characteristic of the melancholic. Jesus was never guilty of playing a game of make-believe about this world and pretending that everything was all right. He recognized the world was a fallen and a sinful world. The vision of its pain and death and sin stirred His soul to its depths. He had the virtue of persistence which is the great grace of the phlegmatic. Nothing could divert Him from His purpose. When Herod threatened Him, He went quietly on with His work; when the Cross loomed up before Him, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

He had the capacity for indignation which is the chief virtue of the choleric temperament. It was kept strictly under control, but it could and did flame up against unrighteousness and sin, as it did against those men who by their trafficking profaned the Temple courts. Without such a capacity for indignation Christ could never have been the Holy Christ. But possibly because, in a Saviour, it is not so much indignation, or mere dogged persistence, or the sense of tragedy that you want, as an absolutely infinite hopefulness, I find the melancholy and the phlegmatic and the choleric temperaments in Christ subordinate to and overshadowed by the sanguine. That is what He was above everything else—He was the sanguine Christ. It is about this aspect of Christ's nature, as the Gospels reveal it to us, that I want to speak with you for just a few minutes.

But I must limit and define my subject still further. Christ was sanguine in many directions. He was sanguine about the future of His cause. On the eve of what looked like the final catastrophe, He said: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." He was sanguine about His own personal destiny. On the very eve of the Cross, He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." But of these aspects of our Lord's amazing confidence I do not purpose saying anything. The aspect to which I propose to confine myself is the aspect suggested by that judgment pronounced by Him upon Zacchaeus which I have taken as my text, viz. our Lord's amazing confidence in human nature.

Human Nature as Christ saw It.

There is a great deal in average human nature to depress and discourage and to fill one with disgust and almost with despair. Mr. Stevenson quotes the saying of that philosopher who said he could believe in humanity *were it not for men*. We all know something of the feeling that prompted that saying. We can idealize human nature in the abstract, we can admire it as a very noble and beautiful thing. But actual living men and women are a very different proposition. About multitudes of them there is little or nothing that is noble and beautiful, and a vast deal that is mean and base and sordid and vile. There are times when we feel inclined to adopt Isaiah's judgment and say of men and women in general that they are a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly. There are times when we feel inclined to adopt deliberately and at leisure that savage verdict which the Psalmist declares he pronounced in haste, viz. that all men are liars—so constantly are we the victims of dishonesty and deceit. We sometimes visit the slum, we see the degraded and brutish lives of those who live in it; and the squalor of it, the bestiality of it, and worst of all, the deadly insensibility and indifference of the people fill us with despair. We read in the newspapers of the follies and extravagances of the rich, of the crass selfishness of their lives, of their fatuous pleasures and insensate craving for excitement, of their wicked waste of wealth when numbers of their fellow-creatures live on the edge of starvation, and again we are tempted to despair of human nature.

Some of us come across illustrations of human nature at its weakest and worst. The minister, in virtue of his calling, has to hear much of the failures and sins of men. He has to listen to hideous confessions of shame, he has to deal with people who seem to have sinned their wills away, and who, in spite of repeated resolves, return helplessly to their wickedness. And in face of it all we can sympathize with the cry that broke from Henry Drummond's lips one Sunday evening: "Oh, the sins of these men! I wonder God can bear them!" It is desperately hard in face of all one sees and hears not to give way to disgust and despair. But when the black mood seizes us, the remedy for it is to sit at Christ's feet and learn of Him. In spite of all the tragic failures, lapses, sins and shames of men, we shall feel they are worth working for, because Christ cherished such marvellous hopes about them. Christ's daring hopes for him—they form man's crown and glory. I know that when the average man wants to find proof of the greatness of human nature he talks of Forth Bridges, and Alpine Tunnels, and Panama Canals, and ocean steamers, and aeroplanes, and wireless telegraphs. But the real greatness of humanity consists in the great things Christ ventured to believe concerning it, and the mighty faith He put in it. When I think of the faith Christ cherished I can believe, in spite of the brutalized dweller in the slum and the frivolous and empty pleasure-seeker of the West End, that man was made a little lower than God. What were these mighty beliefs which the sanguine Christ cherished concerning men? Let me mention two or three of them. I begin with this—

Spiritual Responsiveness.

Our Lord had an extraordinary belief in the *spiritual competence and responsiveness of the average man.* That is to say, He believed that there was something in the human heart, in every human heart, that would respond to God's truth when that truth was declared. The consequence of that faith of His was that He preached to the indiscriminate multitude. Other teachers picked their scholars. They could do nothing with the mixed multitude. They could only impart their truth to select souls. Plato insisted that those who entered his school should have some skill in geometry and philosophy. But Jesus made no conditions. He welcomed the man in the street. He preached His sermons to the ordinary men and women of Galilee. He believed that the heart of the ordinary everyday man or woman would respond to the message He had to deliver. One writer, on the character of Jesus emphasizes His ability to impart spiritual ideas to dull, ignorant, prejudiced people. I am by no means wishful to disparage Christ's "ability" as a teacher. But it does not represent itself to me as a matter of "ability" at all, but rather as a matter of Christ's *belief* in them. Other teachers regarded these dull and ignorant people as hopeless; but Jesus believed that there was in the dullest and most ignorant a certain spiritual sense which would recognize the truth and respond to it. And so He was not afraid of proclaiming His great truths to the common people. That great sermon on the spirituality of God and the universality of worship, He preached to a despised and degraded Samaritan woman. It was an amazing compliment He paid to

the spiritual capacity of human nature, even when that nature was degraded and sunken. "He was not afraid of wasting time or truth on barren souls," says one writer. That is not well expressed. Christ was not afraid of wasting time or truth on a Samaritan woman, on publicans and sinners, on the common man, for the simple reason that He did not believe that any soul was "barren." He believed that man was made in the image of God; that there was consequently in every human being, no matter how ignorant or sunken, something that would recognize and respond to the Divine voice. "Unless transmitter and receiver are keyed together the wireless message trembles in the ether in vain." Jesus believed that the heart of God and the heart of man were keyed together, and so He spoke His Divine messages to all and sundry. And He laid His disciples under orders to trust the spiritual capacity of the ordinary human heart. Christianity is not an esoteric doctrine. It is not a religion for a favoured few. "Go ye into all the world," He said, "and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." He had an amazing faith in the spiritual responsiveness of human nature. He believed God's truth was not meant specially and exclusively for the wise and prudent, He believed it could be revealed to and understood by "babes." Man in Christ's view of him—not the cultured or specially gifted man, but man *qua* man—is spiritually akin to God, and therefore he can speak God's language and understand God's speech.

Original Goodness.

I pass on next to say this: that I find our Lord had a most extraordinary belief in the *essential good-*

ness of human nature. Human nature, in Christ's view of it, was good nature, and He was never afraid of appealing to it. I do not want to be misunderstood in what I say on this point. I do not want to suggest that our Lord took a sort of rose-coloured view of the world. He was an optimist, a courageous, unwavering optimist. But His optimism was not of that shallow and silly sort that ignores the solemn and bitter facts of life. Jesus did not play the farce of "pretending" in which so many people nowadays indulge. He didn't pretend that pain and death and sin did not exist. He did not mock men by telling them they could get rid of these things by ignoring them. He recognized their reality. He recognized their awfulness. He recognized that man was in the grip of these things. It was to deliver men from them that He stooped to be born and to die. The Cross is the final proof of Christ's recognition of the tragic reality of sin and of man's enslavement to it. But while Christ thus recognized the reality of sin and its blighting effects on the souls of men, side by side with that there went an incorrigible faith in a sort of abiding and ineffaceable goodness in human nature. There has been a lot of cheap scorn poured on the theological doctrine of "original sin." But "original sin" is a fact of experience. Christ believed in it and recognized it. Everybody must recognize it who is not absolutely purblind to all the facts before his eyes. But the doctrine of "total depravity," at any rate the sort of teaching about man that phrase "total depravity" seems to suggest,—that he is altogether evil and that there is no good in him until the seed of a new life is planted in him from above,—Christ would never subscribe to. He was an invincible believer in what I may call *original goodness.*

Man was a fallen being, it is true, but he had not become altogether forgetful of his former high estate. There were Divine desires and instincts and impulses in him. Diabolus had laid hold of Mansoul, but he had not made it entirely his own; Mr. Recorder and other adherents of Immanuel still kept a sort of foothold in it. In other words, Jesus believed in original goodness as well as in original sin. And to that original goodness He continually appealed; to it He trusted; on it He worked. His very teaching implies all this. He assumes, for instance, the love of parents for their children. He assumes that in the power of that love they will make sacrifices on their children's behalf. He assumes that there is a certain instinct for pity in the human soul, and that therefore need will not appeal to men in vain. Human fatherhood is so beautiful and holy a thing in His eyes that He uses it as the picture and illustration of the relationship between God and man. He assumes a certain native and imperishable goodness in man that will always respond to Divine and sacrificial love. The Cross is at once the proof of man's sin and of his goodness. It was necessitated by his terrible and tragic sin, for without shedding of blood there was no remission. But it is also a testimony to human goodness. He believed there was something in the human heart to which that Cross would appeal—some ultimate goodness it would touch and quicken, some sealed fount of tears and penitence and adoring love which it would open. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." It was Christ's witness to something imperishably Divine in the human soul.

Salvability and Perfectibility.

And I finish by saying this: that because of His faith in an abiding and imperishable goodness, Christ was magnificently sanguine about the *salvability* and *perfectibility* of every soul. He believed in the *salvability* of every soul. The proof of that is in my text. Zacchaeus was one of those of whom the world despaired. But Jesus believed there was the making of a saint in him. "He also," He said, "is a son of Abraham." That was why Christ became the friend of publicans and sinners. The religious folk of Palestine were amazed at this friendship; they were angry at it; they believed these people were clean outside the pale. They were desperately sick, it is true, but in Christ's view they were not so sick as to be past mending. They were lost, miserably and tragically lost, but they were not so lost as to be past finding. Jesus believed in the recoverability and salvability of every soul. I believe that our rating authorities always set down a certain proportion of the rates due as "voids and irrecoverables." But Jesus knows nothing of "voids and irrecoverables." He recognizes no case as hopeless; He casts none as rubbish to the void. On the other hand, He gathers up the outcasts of Israel. He rakes the gutter for His jewels, and out of the world's waste He makes His saints. There are some people whom we are tempted to give up as hopeless—men of perverted natures and broken wills; we call them "degenerates" and leave them at that. But Christ is sanguine where we are hopeless. The degenerate may become the regenerate. The weak may be made strong enough to withstand in the evil day. The moral pervert may become a man of honour. Christ dares to hope for an uttermost salvation.

And not only does He believe in the salvability of all, but He believes also in the *perfectibility* of all. He believes not simply that He can snatch men from the power of sin, but that He can set them perfect before the throne. "Be ye perfect" was His exhortation to the crowd, and He believed in the possibility of it. Look at the things He did when He was here on earth. What faith in the perfectibility of human nature breathes through them! Recall what He said to the woman charged with and convicted of the shameful sin of adultery. "Neither do I condemn thee," He said, "from henceforth sin no more." He had faith that for that poor wretched creature a life of purity was possible. Look at His treatment of Peter. He trusted him after all his failures and denials. He believed that the impulsive, unreliable, unstable man would yet become a rock. Look at His faith in the Twelve! They were fishermen for the most part, unschooled, uncultivated, insignificant. There was not a man of station or influence amongst them. Very likely Jesus chose these humble men because they were the best He could get. But the amazing thing about the whole business is the unlimited trust Jesus put in them. They seemed more fitted for a fishing expedition than a great spiritual enterprise. And yet Jesus had an unmeasured trust in them. "Upon this rock," He said, "I will build My Church." "I give unto you," He said, "the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." He had faith in the perfectibility of human nature, and He believed that out of those unlettered fisherfolk He could make apostles, prophets, saints and martyrs. It was amazing and challenging hopefulness, but the significant thing is that it is abundantly justified by the facts. Around the throne of God in heaven there is a multitude which no man can

number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues. They are clothed in white robes—in token of their spotless purity; they carry palms in their hands—in token of their completed victory. They came out of the great tribulation, many of them from horrible pits of unspeakable shame, but there they stand complete and perfect, washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Our Lord was the "sanguine" Christ. He was full of a mighty and unconquerable hope. It was no irrational or delusive hope. Our Lord knew what was in man. He saw deeper and further than any one else. And knowing what was in man, He was full of a blessed courage on His account. And that is what makes Christ a universal Saviour. He hoped for every one. And we too, my brethren, must hope for men if we want to help them. The pessimist never furthers the work of salvation. He only spreads despair. It is the sanguine man alone who can be a saviour. And we have a right to be sanguine. I know all about the meanness and vileness of much of the human nature we see. But let us remember this, that He who knew men best hoped the most; and this further, that His hope has been justified by the most amazing miracles of redemption and regeneration. And so let us in this day be followers of the sanguine Christ. Let us face this world in the courage of a mighty and indomitable hope. Let us proclaim our Christ, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, in the blessed confidence that we can present every man perfect in Christ.

XII

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

"*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death.*"—PHIL. iii. 10.

I must not stay to discuss the context at any length or else I shall not get to my text itself. Suffice it to say that Paul is here giving the reason why, all of a sudden, he had resigned his place in the Sanhedrin, surrendered the great career that was opening up before him, and turned his back upon the prospects of wealth and fame and power. It was an inexplicable step to his old associates who had known him in the days when he was the trusted emissary of the Jewish authorities. Like Festus, they were inclined to think Paul was mad. But here the Apostle himself gives the explanation—he had abandoned his career, he had surrendered his hopes of wealth and fame, in order to gain Christ. It had suddenly dawned on Paul that Christ was the pearl of great price, and he had sacrificed everything in order to possess Him. Like Samuel Rutherford, he could say that one smile of Christ's was to him of more value than kingdoms, and so, to gain Christ, he suffered the loss of all things and did count them but dung. To "gain Christ" became Paul's one ambition—the great wish of his soul. "To gain Christ" and to "know Him." I do not think the two phrases stand for two different processes. I do not think that "gaining

Christ" is one thing and "knowing Christ" another. I think the second phrase is explanatory of the first. We gain Christ by knowing Him. We possess Christ only as we apprehend Him. So that it is fair to say that here in my text you get the great ambition of Paul's life, compared to which he counted everything the world had to give as of no more value than the very dust and refuse of the streets.

The Knowledge of Experience.

"That I may know Him." I invite your attention to the exact words the Apostle uses. What the Apostle desired was not knowledge about Christ; he wanted to know Him in a direct, immediate and personal way. He wanted not simply to "know" but to recognize and feel and appropriate, says Bishop Lightfoot. He wanted to know Christ not in the sense of intellectual apprehension, but in the sense of practical experience. There is all the difference in the world between knowing a person and knowing about him. We know about numbers of people whom we do not really know at all. Every movement of the members of the Royal family, for instance, is chronicled for an inquisitive public. Every reader of the newspapers knows all about the King—about his movements, his visits, what he did yesterday, what he is going to do to-morrow. The external life of the King, his royal activities are all public property. But though we know all about him, we do not know him. But there is a little circle—his wife, his children, a little handful of associates—who not only know about him, but who know him in a direct and immediate way.

Every public man lives more or less in the lime-

light. Thousands and tens of thousands are acquainted with the appearances of our leading statesmen, for instance, who have never set eyes on the men themselves. They know all about their opinions and policies and characters. But there is all the difference in the world between the knowledge of the man in the street and the knowledge of those who live within the circle of the family and the home. In the family circle they know him; the man in the street simply knows about him.

Now it was this immediate and personal knowledge Paul coveted above everything else. He did not want to know Christ after the flesh simply. He was not content with knowing the facts about Jesus. He knew these well enough. It is quite possible he knew most of them before he became a Christian. But there was no saving quality in external knowledge of that kind. What Paul desiderated was not to know about Christ, but to know Him; not to know Him as a Figure on the page of history, but to know Him as a Christ in his own soul. It was only a Christ in his own heart who could ever become to him a hope of glory.

And if I may pause in my exposition for a moment, it is to say this: that it is still this knowledge of Christ that saves—the knowledge of personal experience. Do not misunderstand me—I am not minimizing the importance of the historic. I am not suggesting that knowledge of the facts about Christ is unimportant. It is through the study of the facts that we gain the personal and experimental knowledge which is the one thing needful. We read the Gospel story, and suddenly we become aware that we are dealing not with some One who lived and died nineteen centuries ago, but with a living Person actually

in touch now with our souls. Still it remains true that historical knowledge is one thing and experimental knowledge is quite another. And this latter is the knowledge which saves. Multitudes in England know about Christ. I suppose it is true to say that all our people have some rudimentary knowledge of the external facts of His life. But without any breach of charity it may be said that vast multitudes of them remain unregenerate and unsaved in spite of it. The fact is, men and women can only be saved by a contemporary. They can be redeemed and restored not by a figure of the dim past, but only by a Living Presence and Power. It is not enough to know about Christ, we must know Him directly, immediately, experimentally. Christ in us is the hope of glory.

A Progressive Experience.

Look once again at the exact phrasing of the Apostle's speech—"that I may know Him." The phrase is an infinitive phrase in the Greek, but the translation, "that I may know Him," rightly renders its meaning. Paul speaks as if this knowledge he desiderates were still a future experience. But did not Paul at the very time he wrote this letter know Christ in a direct and experimental way? Yes, he did. He had known Christ in that way for years. That was what happened on the way to Damascus: his knowledge of the facts about Jesus changed to an experimental knowledge of Christ Himself. He came into actual touch with Jesus. He discovered Him to be alive. He experienced His power. That is how he himself describes that mighty happening—"it pleased God to reveal His Son in me." Not "to me,"

you notice, but "in me." It was a mighty experience of Christ's power in his own life and soul that came to him on the way to Damascus. This is what he says in this very paragraph about the same mighty event—he was "apprehended by Christ Jesus"; he felt himself in the grasp of the Living and Mighty Lord. It was a direct and overwhelming experience of Christ that came to him on the Damascus road. And the experience was by no means confined to that great and critical occasion. It was continuous. "I live," he declares in one place, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And yet here he speaks as if this experimental knowledge of Christ were a boon still to be gained. "That I may know Him." The fact is, this experimental knowledge of Christ is always progressive. It comes fresh to man, as the manna did of old, morning by morning. No man discovers all at once all that there is in Christ. "In Him are all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom hidden." The best of men, as a result, know only in part. We say sometimes about our human friends, "I know so and so through and through." But nobody knows Christ through and through. There are heights of knowledge, and great breadths of wisdom, and vast depths of love which the best of men have never explored. Christ is constantly surprising men by new discoveries of grace, and fresh revelations of Divine wisdom. He is an exhaustless mine of truth; He is an infinite ocean of wisdom and love. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" cries Paul himself, "how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." He had been enjoying for years ever richer and fuller experiences of the love and grace of Christ, and yet he felt as if he were only on the edge and margin

of things. "That I may know Him," he cries. John declared that if all the things which Jesus did were written down all the world would not contain the books that should be written. And the same sense of the limitlessness of Christ breathes through an aspiration like this. Throughout all the years of life and throughout all eternity, Paul, with all saints, would be following on to know the Lord, seeking to comprehend what is the length and breadth, what is the height and depth of that love which passeth knowledge.

The experimental knowledge of Christ is a progressive knowledge. And in my text I think certain stages in the progress of that knowledge are indicated. "That I may know Him," says the Apostle, "and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death." As I understand the verse, these various phrases represent stages in a man's experience of Christ. First, he knows the power of Christ's Resurrection, then he becomes a partner in Christ's sufferings, and ultimately he becomes so entirely one with Christ that he dies with Him. The order, I know, strikes a reader first as odd and strange, especially because resurrection is made to precede suffering and death. Bishop Lightfoot, for instance, feels the strangeness of it so keenly that he practically transposes the order and paraphrases like this: "When I speak of knowing Him, I mean, that I may feel the power of His Resurrection; but to feel this it is necessary first that I should share His sufferings." Now I know it looks like presumption to differ from the great bishop, whose commentaries on Paul's Epistles are practically the final word in exegesis, and I know that such difference is always at one's peril, yet in this case I

am going to be presumptuous enough to challenge the bishop's interpretation. I am quite convinced he is wrong. He is not only wrong in his interpretation of the Apostle's thought, he is untrue to the facts of life and experience. Far from it being necessary to share in Christ's sufferings before a man can feel the power of his Resurrection, I am persuaded that not until a man has felt the power of Christ's Resurrection will he share His sufferings. In Christ's case suffering and death preceded resurrection; in the Christian's case resurrection must precede suffering and death. Indeed, the bishop himself, when he comes to comment on the actual words, modifies the interpretation he gives in the paraphrase. "The participation in Christ's sufferings," he says, "partly follows upon and partly precedes the power of His Resurrection." I should myself say "always follows." The arrangement of the Apostolic phrases seems to me to set forth the invariable order of spiritual experience. The first thing we know about Christ is the power of His Resurrection. Then, as we make more and more room for Him, we begin to become partners in His sufferings, until at length we become so completely and entirely Christian that we are ready to share in His death.

The Power of His Resurrection.

This is the first stage in our knowledge of Christ—we know the power of His Resurrection. That is the very beginning of the Christian life. We rise from the death of ignorance and sin through the power of the Risen Christ. That is exactly where Paul's Christian life began. That was exactly his first

experience of Christ. He knew Him as the Risen Lord. Paul—before the Damascus experience—had shared presumably in the current and popular Jewish belief that Jesus was an impostor and a malefactor whose career had been ended on the Cross. To him it was sheer blasphemy that any one should assert that this criminal was the long-expected Messiah and God's Son. In his honest indignation against these blasphemers he haled them, both men and women, and cast them into prison and persecuted them unto foreign cities. And then, on that never-to-be-forgotten day, it was flashed in upon Paul's conscience that Jesus was no dead criminal at all, but a living and exalted Lord. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." That was Paul's first glimpse of Christ—as the living Lord. That is when his Christian life began—with the experience of the power of Christ's Resurrection. And it was in the region of Christ's Resurrection Paul's life moved for some time. During those years in Arabia, I believe that Paul was revising his beliefs in the light of Christ's Resurrection—building up a new edifice of faith, trying to read the meaning of the Cross in the light of the Empty Grave. The distinctive Pauline theology was beaten out in those solitary months. He emerged from Arabia exulting in the belief that the Cross was the final sacrifice, and rejoicing in the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. That is where Paul's Christian life began, in a direct experience of the Risen Christ, and in the assurance of emancipation and release and the hope of glory, all of which were the products of the power of Christ's Resurrection.

And that, I repeat, is how the Christian life always starts. We come into touch with the Living Lord. Christ ceases to be a Name and becomes a Presence.

We feel Him at work within us breaking all our bondages, scattering all our fears, giving us liberty, life, and immortal hope. The Christian life starts with something that Christ does for us. It starts in triumph and exultation. The living Christ quickens us even when we are dead in trespasses and sins. We begin with the experience of the power of Christ's Resurrection.

The Fellowship of Suffering.

But while the experience of the power of Christ's Resurrection is the beginning of our knowledge of Christ and the start of our Christian life, it certainly is not the end. The Christian life is not simply something done for us and given to us by Christ, it is something also which we give to and do with Him. It begins to dawn upon the man who has felt the power of Christ's Resurrection, that there is a deeper and more sacred and more intimate experience into which he may enter—he may share in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. He may know Christ by becoming a partner with Him in His toil and sacrifice, in His sorrow and redeeming passion. He may know Christ by bearing His Cross, drinking His cup, being baptized with His baptism. And this is a deeper and more sacred knowledge. There is nothing for knitting men's souls together like partnership in danger and fellowship in sorrow. In the hour of danger conventions perish and the soul reveals itself naked and bare, and in such an hour men who stand side by side know one another and are knit to each other by ties that nothing can sever. I read recently, in the paper, of the death of one of the survivors of the Balaclava Charge. That ghastly and terrible ride

into the jaws of death—that sharing of a common danger—had bound the survivors together with hoops of steel. They were men of all ranks and conditions, but after that experience, in which they had faced death together, all sense of distinction vanished and they were comrades.

When one man shares his sorrow with another it is the final proof of intimacy. To the outside world we carry our heads high, we stiffen the lip, we wear an air of indifference; but there are a few, who know us, to whom we can tell out the sorrows of our hearts. This is the very sign of deep and familiar knowledge. And so exactly we know Christ when we enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, when we share His griefs and sorrows. We are only in the A B C class so long as we simply know the power of His Resurrection in the way of the forgiveness of sins and the hope of glory; we really begin to know Christ when we share His spirit and His sorrow becomes our sorrow, His grief our grief, and His agony our agony; when we weep with Him over Jerusalem, agonize with Him in Gethsemane, and die with Him on Calvary.

"The fellowship of—the *κοινωνια*—the having in common—His suffering!" In what way can the sufferings of our Lord be common to us and be shared by us? I can only in a sentence or two suggest ways in which we may enter into this sacred and intimate fellowship. Of course, into our Lord's atoning sacrifice we may not enter. The Cross was the one perfect oblation and sacrifice. But there are certain aspects of our Lord's sorrows which we *may* share. In fact, we only really become Christians as we do share in them.

(1) We may and must share in the sufferings that came upon our Lord for righteousness' sake. He was the despised and rejected of men. He came to

the judgment hall and the Cross out of loyalty to His Father's will. Every Christian may and must share in this suffering. For still it remains true that they who will live godly must suffer persecution. We can climb the steep ascent of heaven only through peril, toil and pain. Paul shared in the sufferings of Christ in this respect. It was given to him to suffer for Christ's name. "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one." And as he suffered these things Paul felt himself strangely near his Lord. He spoke of the weals and scars they left as "the marks of Jesus." And although stripes and imprisonments do not come our way, we, too, must suffer with Christ. For He is still the scorned and reviled of men. He still stands at the judgment seat and at the scourging post, and He is still crucified afresh. And whoso would be faithful to Him must be content to stand in the pillory of the world's contempt. There is no being a Christian on easy terms. We must suffer hardship. We know Christ in a deep and real way only as we to-day enter into the fellowship of His sufferings.

(2) There is the suffering Christ endured on account of sin. He bore the burden of it on His soul. He felt the shame of it. He was moved to the depths of His soul for the victims and slaves of it. A woman was brought into His presence one day—convicted of sin—and our Lord felt the disgrace of it so vividly that He hung His head for shame. It was sheer torture to His soul. "When He beheld the city, He wept over it"—over its indifference, irreligion, wickedness and impending doom. And we simply do not know Christ unless we enter into the fellowship of His suffering in this respect—unless we feel the sin

and shame of the world as a burden on our own souls. "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren according to the flesh," said St. Paul. The sin and rebellion of the Jews burdened and haunted him. "Who is weak," he cries in another place, "and I am not weak?" He suffered, as Christ suffered, at the thought of the wandering, ignorant, sinning millions of the world. But what about us? Do we share in the sufferings of Christ in this respect? We are quick to sympathize with physical suffering and loss. Our hearts went out to the widows and orphans down in Senghenydd and to those poor emigrants who had such a nerve-shattering time on the *Volturno*. But what about the multitudes who are losing their souls? "When He beheld the city He wept over it." Has the thought of our cities and their sin and shame and their indifference to God ever moved you to tears? We do not know Christ—really know Him—until we become partners in His sufferings.

(3) And then again there is this yearning passion of the Lord for the souls of men. He saw them as sheep not having a shepherd, and He yearned to gather them in, with a passion that was full of pain. "Them also I must bring," He cried, and His picture of the shepherd out in the wilderness seeking in the cold and the dark, in weariness and painfulness, his one lost sheep, is but a picture of Himself in His seeking and suffering love. Paul shared in this suffering. "I am ready to become all things to all men," he wrote, "if by all means I may save some." He spent a life of toil and labour in His passion to save. He was ready to be spent out for men's souls.

> "Oh, to save these! to perish for their saving,
> Die for their life, be offered for them all!"

But what about us? Do we share our Lord's

passion and pain? Does the thought of the millions "in heathen darkness lying" give us any concern? I am persuaded that the Church has stopped short in its knowledge of Christ. We know something about the power of His Resurrection, but we have not entered into the fellowship of His suffering. There is no suggestion of the thorn crown or of the nail-prints about us. We are easy, untroubled, satisfied. The thought of the world's deep need and of human sin causes us no trouble or pain. But do we know Christ in any real way if with so much wickedness and sin at our doors, and such myriads of unevangelized abroad we can remain unconcerned? It is this deeper and more intimate knowledge we need. When we become sharers in Christ's sufferings—when we possess His sorrow for sin and His passion for souls, the time will not be far off when the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

XIII

HOW CAN WE BE SURE OF JESUS?

"*These are they which bear witness of me.*"—JOHN v. 39.

I AM going to ask you to allow me to treat this sentence simply as a motto. In its original reference it means that the Jewish Scriptures of the Old Testament were full of testimony to Jesus. If the Jews had only read them with open eyes and candid minds they would have found Jesus pictured in their pages. They would have discovered that He was the key to the interpretation of prophet and Psalmist. Moses and the prophets they all testified concerning Him. That was the tragedy of Jewish unbelief—their own Scriptures, which they professed to reverence so deeply, ought to have saved them from it, for they were full of Christ. "These are they," said Jesus of them, "which testify of Me."

I want in this sermon, however, to use the words to cover a wider field than that merely of the testimony of the Old Testament. No doubt the subject of the "Old Testament witness to Christ" would furnish a useful and profitable theme of meditation. But the Old Testament is not the ground of our faith in Jesus. We believe in Him on other and different testimony. And it is this other and wider testimony I want to talk about with you at this time. The question I want to ask, and I hope in some degree to answer, is this: How can we be sure of Jesus? How can we be sure He was the kind of Person the Apostolic

writings make Him out to have been? Was Jesus really the mighty Divine Person portrayed for us in the New Testament? What testimony can be quoted to prove the truth of the portraiture? It is quite possible there may be some here who have never been troubled by questions of this kind. Their acceptance of the New Testament Christ has been spontaneous, instinctive, immediate. Perhaps theirs is the happier lot. But, then, there may be some here who have been troubled by these things. Their faith has been shaken. They know not quite what to believe. At any rate, they are not sure of Christ. It is to such primarily and principally I address myself, though it will do no harm to those whose faith has never known disturbance to realize that that instinctive and immediate faith of theirs rests on a solid foundation of reason and proof.

The Person of Jesus has always been the centre of the theological battle. What Hougoumont was to Waterloo, the question of Christ's Person has been to the theological fight. It has been the critical position. Around it ever since the fourth century with its great Arian controversy,—yes, and before that—right down to our present day, the battle has raged. The reason of this is obvious. Historic, apostolical, supernatural Christianity stands or falls with Christ. If the critics and opponents of Christianity can prove that Jesus was something other and something less than the Divine Christ pictured for us in the new Testament—then of necessity the whole fabric of Apostolic Christianity goes by the board. For it is built and based from first to finish upon the supernatural Christ. When we contend earnestly for the apostolic conception of Christ we are contending not for some unimportant outwork which can be aban-

doned without any detriment to the main position, we are defending the very citadel of the faith.

I say this point of the Person of Christ has been the point around which the battle has always raged. Occasionally it is true there have been lulls in the fighting, and then the attack has been made again with more fierceness than ever. We are in the midst of such an attack to-day. Those of you who take any notice of current literature know that sedulous and determined attempts are being made to reduce the figure of Jesus until it can be fitted into the ordinary human categories. Some, indeed—of whom perhaps Professor Drews is the most notable—go the length of saying that there never was a Jesus, that the whole story is mythical and legendary. I do not know that we need worry ourselves about this particular school of critics. We talk, do we not, about giving a man rope and he will hang himself? That is exactly what has happened in the case of Professor Drews and his school. Criticism has committed suicide. Liberal thought—so-called—has destroyed itself by its extravagance and eccentricity.

But short of Professor Drews' position—which makes the world an insane world—there is a large school of scholars and critics who maintain that while Jesus was undoubtedly a historical Person, He was very different from the New Testament picture of Him. They start from the a priori position that miracles cannot happen and that a special Incarnation of God is impossible, and to make Jesus accord with these assumptions of theirs they promptly proceed to eliminate every suggestion of wonder and the supernatural from the life of Jesus. Schmiedel goes through the Gospels and informs us, as a result, that there are just nine sayings of our Lord which cannot

be disputed. He picks out these nine sayings and thinks them indisputably authentic because they run counter to the feeling of worship for Jesus which characterizes the Gospels. That is to say, the only passages Schmiedel accepts as authentic are those in which Jesus seems to repudiate Divinity and the power of working miracles. These passages he calls the foundation-pillars of a really scientific life of Jesus. Who uttered the rest of the discourses—the Parables, the Sermon on the Mount, the Discourses in the Upper Room—Schmiedel does not say. Everything that clashes with the view of Jesus given in these nine passages must be rejected. Other scholars deal with equal ruthlessness with the reported facts of Christ's life. They reject the Virgin Birth, they explain away the Miracles, they deny the Resurrection. It is a poor, pale, meagre figure that is left to us when they have finished their operations. The utmost they give us is a Teacher—a little bit mad perhaps—who finished his career on a Cross and was laid to sleep, his last long sleep, in Joseph's grave.

Now the question that confronts us to-day is this: Which is the true picture, this meagre residual Jesus the critics give us, or the mighty Christ of the New Testament pages? Everything depends on the answer we give. If the critics are right, if it can be proved that He was nothing more than a sort of peasant-prophet, then the time will not be distant when Christianity will be buried in the same grave with Him. The Christianity we know, the Christianity of the Apostles and of the Holy Church throughout the world, can only live as it is built upon a supernatural, Divine and Living Christ. This is the question, then, I want to ask: Have we a right to believe in the Apostolic Christ? Can we be sure that Christ was and

is the kind of Person the New Testament declares Him to have been? Bear with me while I give you certain reasons and advance certain considerations which justify us in holding this tremendous faith.

The New Testament Picture.

But perhaps before I begin to advance proofs of the authenticity and reality of the New Testament picture of Christ, I had better tell you briefly what the picture is, and I cannot do it better than by quoting Dr. Denney's words in his great book—"Jesus and the Gospel." "To the apostles and early Christians Christ is the Prince of Life, Lord of all, Judge of the living and the dead, at God's right hand, the Giver of the Spirit, the fulfiller of all the promises of God. He is not the first of Christians or the best of men, but something absolutely different from this. The apostles and their converts are not persons who share the faith of Jesus; they are persons who have Jesus as the object of their faith and who believe in God through Him."

There is no denying that this is the view given by the New Testament as a whole. It tells us of a mighty Person supernaturally born, living a supernatural life, supernaturally raised from the dead, and exerting still supernatural influence and power over the hearts and lives of men. That is the total impression left upon us by the New Testament. But critics try to get rid of this total impression by disparaging the Apostolic testimony. They say that for the real truth about Christ we ought to consult not Paul's Epistles, but the Gospels. Now it is absurd to contend that we ought to take no notice of Paul's letters. As a matter of fact Paul's letters—some of them—are the earliest

Christian documents we possess. They were written within thirty years of the death of Jesus. There were people still alive who had known Him and companied with Him. Is it credible that Paul could have imposed false and exaggerated views of his own upon the entire Church—seeing that Peter and John were still alive? Would not these men who had been Christ's intimates at once have challenged Paul if he had been wrong? But instead of challenging Paul, they agree with him. Paul can associate them with himself and say (speaking of the Risen and Exalted Christ), "So we preached and so ye believed." The objection to Paul's witness is wanton and absurd. He gives us a faithful account of what the early Church and the members of the Apostolic group thought of Christ.

But suppose for a moment we let the critics have their way and confine ourselves to the Gospels. It is still the same Christ we get. But again, they ask us to narrow our field and to rule out the Gospel according to St. John. That is a late, idealized picture, they say. For the authentic portrait we must confine ourselves to the first three Gospels, the Gospels that are commonly known as the Synoptic Gospels. I do not admit that there is any adequate justification for this arbitrary narrowing of the evidence. But even if we confine our inquiry to the Synoptics —it is still the Divine and Supernatural Christ and not the man Jesus we get. I cannot stay to give full proof of my statement. Let these simple facts suffice. It is in the Synoptic Gospels Christ takes upon Himself to alter, abrogate and annul the sacred Mosaic law. It is in the Synoptics He declares Himself to be the Giver of Rest to weary souls. It is in the Synoptics He declares that for His sake men must be willing to leave father and mother and wife

and children and brothers and sisters. It is in the Synoptics He declares that He is the Judge of men, that at His bar all men will stand for judgment and that by their attitude to Him their destiny will be settled. It is in the Synoptics these tremendous words are to be found: "All things have been delivered unto Me of my Father, and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."

Perhaps I need not add anything more. In the Synoptics Jesus is pictured for us as Moses' Lord, the Giver of Rest to weary souls, the unchallenged Master of human hearts and lives, the Judge of all the world, the unique and solitary Son of God. It does not matter how you mangle and tear the New Testament you cannot get rid of the Supernatural Christ. He is in the very warp and woof of it. Matthew and Paul, Mark and Peter, Luke and John—it is essentially the same picture they give, and the picture is not that of a man, however good, but of the mighty Son of God. Now how are we to be sure the picture is true?

The New Testament Witness.

Well, first of all, there is *the witness of the New Testament itself*. I know critics seek to weaken and disparage this witness, but there is a sort of self-evidencing power about the New Testament that nullifies and disarms criticism and puts it clean out of court. I am not now claiming infallibility for the New Testament. I do not say a thing is necessarily true because it is in the New Testament. That was the position our fathers took, and taking that stand the word of

Scripture settled things for them. All they had to do was to quote a proof text, and any question in dispute was settled. We cannot do that now, for it is just the historicity of the New Testament account that is challenged.

But if we cannot claim that a thing is true because it is in the Bible, it is legitimate for us to say this, that the picture of Christ given to us in the New Testament commends itself to heart and conscience as true. It is not simply that the men who bear witness are reliable men. I know men try to detract from Paul's testimony by saying he was an epileptic. That is a pure guess with nothing to support it; what we know is, that Paul was a man of massive mind and of keen and searching intellect. As to the rest of the Apostles they were plain, unimaginative persons, and on that account, as Mr. Lathom says, the more excellent witnesses.

But it is not on the character of the witnesses I lay stress just now, but on the *character of the witness they bear*. I have heard magistrates say that they can tell almost by instinct when a witness is telling the truth. Truth has a certain ring and tone and accent, and the witness given in the New Testament has the unmistakable mark of truth. It certifies itself. Truth has always a self-evidencing power. And the picture of the Christ given us here guarantees itself as true. We know as we read the story of His life that we are in contact with reality; we can say of the picture of Christ given us in the New Testament what Coleridge said of the Bible as a whole: "It finds us." This is no fancy sketch. This is the picture of a real person. The character of Christ was beyond invention. The reconciliation of contraries in His character, the union of the Divine and the human in

Him, the unity of the resultant character all prove that what we have here is not an imaginative sketch, but a picture from life.

If a man set out to describe a character who should be at once man and God, human and Divine, earthly and heavenly, he would have given us a monstrosity. No genius has ever attempted the task. The greatest geniuses would have ignominiously failed. But these Galilean peasants picture such a being for us. He is true man, and yet the glory of the Divine shines through every word and action. There is nothing discordant in His life. There is no hiatus in the character. He is like his cloke—without seam. That is to say, unlearned and ignorant men have accomplished something we should have said was impossible. How do you account for it? I account for it by saying that the picture is not their product at all. They simply set down what they saw with their own eyes and what their own hands handled of the word of life. The very nature of the witness borne establishes its truth. The Apostles were able to picture this Christ just because *He lived*.

The Church Witness.

But the witness to the reality of the Christ of the New Testament does not end there. There is the *added witness of the Christian Church*. The Church has borne its witness all down the centuries not to a residual Jesus, but to a Divine and Exalted Christ. Its confession all down the centuries has been that Christ is Light of Light, very God of very God. But it is not so much the confessional witness of the Church I have in mind just now as the impressive, and, indeed, irresistible witness of its continuous experience.

What I mean is that the New Testament Christ is not simply an article in the Church's creed, He is a Fact, *the* Fact in the Church's life.

It ought to be borne in mind that in strict order of precedence Christian experience always precedes Christian doctrine. The doctrine is simply the attempt to give logical expression to the experience. Paul's doctrine of the Atonement, for instance, was not invented in cold blood. It was drawn out of the blood and fire of his own experience. The crushing burden of sin, the ineffectiveness of law, the redeeming and life-giving power of Christ were vital experiences in the Apostle's soul before they became translated into doctrines. And the mighty and Divine Christ is an experience. The witness of the New Testament is ratified by the facts of our own spiritual life. We know Christ not as the residual Jesus of criticism, but as the mighty and redeeming Lord of the New Testament picture, who accomplishes in us and upon us the works which only God could do.

We know Him, for instance, as a *Living Presence*. Christ is not simply a memory, He is a living friend. He is not simply an example, He is a present help. There is all the difference in the world between the inspiration we get from the contemplation of the example of the heroic dead, and the effectual and personal succour we get from Christ. He is actually with us. We know He is risen and alive. He lives in us.

> "We touch Him in Life's Throng and Press,
> And we are Whole Again."

We know Him as *the Giver of Forgiveness*. The New Testament story says that when here on earth He actually did forgive sins. He did not declare for-

giveness simply; He actually gave men redemption and release. We know that is true, because He has done the same thing for us. Millions have, like John Bunyan's Christian, gone to the foot of the Cross, and at the Cross the burden of their sins has been loosed and has fallen into the sepulchre, and they have never seen it more. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" asked the indignant Pharisees. Well, who can? But here is a multitude which no man can number bearing joyful testimony to the fact that Christ has conferred upon them that unspeakable boon. The mighty Christ of the New Testament is the Christ of the experience of the saints.

Then we know Him again as the giver of *moral empowerment*. He announced Himself as able to give release to the captives and opening of prisons to them that are bound. It is a stupendous claim. But it is true. He has been doing it all the centuries: He is doing it still. He makes weak men strong, and timid people brave, and enslaved men free. Men are constantly being washed and justified and sanctified by Him. I met not long ago, on the other side of the Atlantic, a minister—once a seemingly helpless drunkard, now a mighty Christian Evangelist. Christ accomplishes that mighty miracle upon men. He empowers them, He enables them to stand in the evil day and brings them off more than conquerors. The redeeming Christ is not a picture in a book, He is a fact in innumerable lives. The power of Christ is not simply an assertion of the New Testament, it is an experience in the lives of the saints.

In this way the witness of the Church confirms and ratifies the witness of the Bible. The New Testament does not stand alone. The New Testament and the New Testament Church are inseparably connected together.

The Bible is the text, the Church is the commentary upon it. No, it is more than that: the Church itself is a Bible. The story of every successive stage in the Church's history is a fresh Bible. Indeed, the story of every redeemed soul is a Bible. All the mighty assertions of the Written Word are confirmed and ratified in the Bible of the experience of the saints. All the signs and wonders of the Incarnate Life are being repeated to-day by the Living Lord. So that what Mr. T. R. Glover says is beautifully true: "The Gospels are not four, but ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, and the last word of every one of them is this: Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

It is not the witness of the Book alone we have to rely upon, but the continuous witness of the Church. Do you remember how the Gospel of St. John ends? It was so wonderful a story that it seemed to need some confirmation, and so certain witnesses added a note at the end to this effect: "This is the disciple, (*i. e.* the beloved disciple mentioned in the preceding paragraph) which beareth witness of these things and wrote these things, and we *know that his witness is true*." And so an innumerable army of redeemed men vouch for the truth of the New Testament picture of Christ,

"Saints of the early dawn of Christ,
Saints of imperial Rome;
Saints of the cloistered middle age,
Saints of the modern home;
Saints of the soft and sunny East,
Saints of the frozen seas;
Saints of the isles that wave their plumes,
In the far Antipodes;
Saints of the marts and busy streets,
Saints of the squalid lanes;
Saints of the silent solitudes,
Of the prairies and the plains;

Saints who were wafted to the skies,
In the torment robe of flame;
Saints who have graven on men's thoughts,
A monumental name:"

They all come and set to their seals that all that the Gospel writers say of Christ is true, for the mighty powers attributed to Him have been exercised upon them, and the mighty deeds there attributed to Him have been wrought again in their own experience.

So we may be quite sure of Christ,—not the meagre and ineffective figure which criticism presents to us, not the "residual Jesus,"—but the New Testament Christ, the Redeeming Lord, the Saviour of Souls, the Living and Mighty Son of God. The evidence for that Christ is not nineteen centuries old, it is contemporaneous; it is not written in books simply, it is written in human lives. Of all redeemed and regenerate Christian lives, it may be said, "these are they which testify of Me."

Personal Experience.

The witness to Christ is, as I think, convincing and irrefragable. Criticism can never take away our Lord. For when the critics think they have safely buried Him, He mocks at them by revealing Himself in this life and that in all His rising power. At the same time, I realize that to be absolutely and for ever sure of Christ, there is one other witness we need, and that is the witness of our own hearts. Once a man has made experiment of Christ, he will know for himself that it is no mere pathetic and ineffective Teacher he is dealing with, but a living and mighty Lord.

And to that experiment I invite you. The witness of the New Testament and the experience of the saints ought to do as much as this, at any rate

—they ought to make us feel that Jesus deserves—shall I say?—a trial. Will you put Him to the test? You man haunted by the fears of sin, and bound in its power, betake yourself to Christ and see whether He can really release you from the tyranny of evil habit, and give you a conscience cleansed and free from guilt. You man with the weak will—often failing, often defeated, often shamed—betake yourself to Christ and see whether He really can strengthen you with might by His Spirit in the inward man, so that you, too, come off more than conqueror. You man with the restless spirit, the dissatisfied heart, longing for peace and failing to find it, betake yourself to Christ and see by actual experiment whether He can give rest to your soul. Try Him! Put your case in His hands! I have no fear as to the result. What He has done for the saints of every age, what He has done for some of us, He will do also for you. You will then have the witness in yourself, and be able to add your voice to that of the multitude of redeemed souls, and out of your own experience say: "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ: Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father."

XIV

THE GRASP OF CHRIST

"*I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus.*"—PHIL. iii. 12.

I WISH that, in the interests of clearness, our revisers had taken their courage in both their hands and given us a simpler and less ambiguous word than this word "apprehend." In its primary meaning, no doubt, "apprehend" is a correct enough translation, for, primarily, the word means "to seize, to lay hold of." And quite possibly in the days of King James that primary meaning was the dominant meaning. But a change has come over the use of the word. Except in the case of the arrest of a prisoner, the word nowadays scarcely ever refers to a physical seizure. It has come to have the specialized meaning of "seizing with the mind," "understanding." That is what we usually mean when we say that we "apprehend," we mean that we "understand." In its current, ordinary use, the word stands for an intellectual process. But the Greek word, which it represents in this passage, refers not to an intellectual process, but to a physical act. It is the primary, not the secondary, sense of "apprehend" that we want if we are to get the Apostle's meaning. So I say, I wish the revisers had dispensed with this ambiguous word altogether, and had used a word like "grasp," or " lay hold of." The Twentieth Century Testament shakes itself loose from all sentimental considerations and translates, "I press

on in the hope of actually laying hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." That is undoubtedly the Apostle's meaning. Let me put it even more tersely like this, "I press on, striving to grasp that for which also I was grasped by Christ."

Now without spending any time on the discussion of what precedes or what follows, let me ask you to consider with me the implications of this sentence for a moment or two. If you will look at the sentence for a moment, you will see that there are two actions referred to in it. First of all, there is an action on the part of Christ—the Lord "grasped" Paul. And, secondly, there is an action on the part of the Apostle —he had been trying to "grasp" that for which Christ had grasped him. Here is the Apostle's Christian life in its beginning—he was "grasped" of Christ Jesus; here is the story of that Christian life ever since—he had been striving to grasp that for which he had been grasped by Christ Jesus. And that double "grasp" is still the condition of the Christian life. In it both Christ and man have to play their part. "Teneo et teneor," so runs the motto of one of our noble houses, "I hold and I am held." If you reverse the order it would serve for the Apostle Paul's motto: it would serve for the motto of every Christian life, "we are held, and we hold." It begins with the grasp of Christ, but the Lord's grasp must be answered by a grasp of our own. And it is only when the grasp of man answers the grasp of the Lord that the Christian life becomes real and deep and strong.

Now let me speak with you briefly about Christ's grasp of Paul and the answering grasp of the Apostle.

Christ's Grasp of Paul.

First of all, let me speak with you for a minute of *Christ's grasp of Paul.* "I was grasped," he says, "by Christ Jesus." The tense of the verb—so all the commentators say—makes it clear that the Apostle is referring to a definite historic event, and they are unanimous in their opinion that the event the Apostle had in his mind is that staggering event which took place one noon-day outside the walls of Damascus. That was what really happened on that memorable day—Paul was "grasped" by Christ. The very word admirably describes the occurrence. Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians. He was full of rage against them. He thought he was doing God service in persecuting them. Jesus Christ to Paul in his unconverted days was a deceiver and impostor, and the Christian preaching, in his view of it, was simply drawing people astray to their own eternal loss. For whatever we may think about the course of Paul's spiritual history, this, at any rate, is certain, he was always an *honest man.* He was as honest in the days of his persecuting fury as he was in the days of his missionary zeal. When he was busy haling men and women and casting them into prison, he thought he was in the line of his duty. He believed that he *ought,* that he was under a solemn obligation, to do many things contrary to the name of the Lord Jesus. Well, I say this word "grasped" exactly describes the change—the sudden and startling change—that took place in the case of this arch-persecutor. He left Jerusalem as the emissary of the high priests; he entered Damascus as a humble believer in Christ. He set out for Damascus to

persecute; when he made his first public appearance there it was to preach. The change was so startling, so sudden, so complete, that people could scarcely convince themselves it was true. What had happened between the departure from Jerusalem and the entry into Damascus? This had happened—Christ had "grasped" Paul. This is the account he himself gave of that never-to-be-forgotten experience. "It came to pass as I made my journey and drew nigh to Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying unto me, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' And I answered, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And He said unto me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutest.'" Paul was a man arrested in mid-career. It was as if some mighty hand had been placed upon him which changed the entire current of his life. What had really happened was this: Jesus Christ had made Himself real to him. Jesus Christ had revealed Himself to be the living and exalted Son of God. Paul had come into actual touch with the Lord—he had been "grasped" by the Lord Jesus. And that, in essence, is what happens at every conversion. It is not every conversion that is as sudden and violent as Paul's. But whether our religious life begins with a great and sudden convulsion of the soul, or whether it is the result of quiet processes of growth, the real start of religion comes when we are "grasped" by Christ; when the Christ about whom we have heard a thousand times presents Himself real and living to the soul and lays hold upon us. As far as most of us in this congregation are concerned, Christ's name has been familiar to us all our days; we were taught about Him in our homes; we have been accustomed

to hear Him preached in churches, like this, Sunday by Sunday. But it is possible to know *about* Christ, and to hear Christ preached about continually —and yet for Him to remain distant, unreal, ineffective. And then some day something happens; this dim, distant, unreal Christ confronts us, touches us, lays His hands upon us. He becomes the most real and living of all realities. I have seen this take place again and again, sometimes gradually, sometimes suddenly. I have seen young people, for instance, to whom Jesus was little more than a name, realizing that He was touching *them,* calling *them,* in actual and immediate contact with *them*. And that experience marks the beginning of vital religion. The first thing in it is the "grasp" of Christ. The initiative is on His part, not ours. We love because He first loved us. We talk about "finding" Christ. But it is not so much a case of our "seeking" Christ, as of His "seeking" us. It is not the sheep who seeks the Shepherd, it is the Shepherd who seeks the sheep. Christ is looking for us, when we are quite heedless of Him and indifferent to Him. He is "seeking" those who neglect and ignore Him. In a thousand ways He tries to touch them and get a grip of them. By the preaching of the Word, by the influence of home, by the persuasions of life, by the dispensations of Providence, by pain, by sorrow, by loss, by death, Christ seeks to lay hold of, to come into actual and living touch with this soul and that. And that is when religion really begins, when the Lord succeeds in His patient endeavour, when He succeeds in making Himself felt, known, realized by us, when, like Paul, we are "grasped" by Christ.

The Purpose of Christ's Grasp.

Now let me pass on to speak for a moment about *the purpose of Christ's grasp of Paul.* Let me read my text again, "I press on, striving to grasp that for which also I was grasped by Christ." "*That for which I was grasped!*" It seems that Christ had a definite purpose in view when He laid hold of Paul. He had a specific end in mind. That is so in all Christ's "graspings." Conversion is always purposeful. The very word suggests as much as that. Scientists talk about the "transformation of energy." That is exactly what conversion is. It is a transformation of energy. When a man lives for the world and self and sin, he is applying his energies—his affections, his emotions, his manifold powers—in wrong directions. He is misapplying them; misusing them. When Christ "grasps" a man it is with the definite object of turning those energies into their true channels; not of suppressing them, but of transforming them. The "grasp" of Christ is the beginning of religion, but it is not the end. Christ "grasps" us not simply to make us sure of Him, but in order that when we are sure of Him He may give a new aim and direction to our life.

What, then, was the purpose of Christ's "grasp" of Paul? What did He lay hold of Paul for? "That for which Paul was seized by Christ Jesus"—what was it? Most of the commentators seem to think that it was the missionary commission which was entrusted to Paul at the moment of his conversion. Christ "grasped" Paul, because He knew the flaming zeal which made him the most furious of persecutors, turned into its right channel, would make him the

prince of missionaries. Now I believe that is part of the truth. But I am also persuaded that Christ's purpose was wider and richer than that. If I read Paul's spiritual history aright, I gather that he was a man with a torn and distracted heart, hungering for peace but looking for it in the wrong place. I gather further that, while from the Pharisaic point of view he was a very devout and religious man, his conception of religion was more mechanical than spiritual, and that he laid the emphasis on the observance of the Law rather than on the believing and loving heart. And when Christ "grasped" Paul, it was to set him right on these points as well as to turn his energy and zeal into Christian channels. So in reply to the question, "What was it Christ grasped Paul for?" I should be disposed to broaden the answer and to reply, "For at least these three things: (1) To give him peace of heart; (2) to make a saint of him; (3) to make a missionary of him."

(1) Christ "grasped" Paul in order to bring him *peace of heart.* From the time Paul had come to years of discretion he had carried within his breast a divided and distracted heart. How divided and distracted it was you can discern for yourselves by reading that tragic and tremendous seventh of Romans. What plagued and harassed and tortured Paul was his sense of sin. He tried to gain "righteousness," that is to say, he tried so to live as to be able to challenge God and demand before heaven's throne a certificate of "Not Guilty," because he had given to the Law a perfect obedience. But the more he tried, the more he failed. The Jews talked of him as a "blameless" person—but Paul knew the secrets of his own heart, and he knew that in the sight of God he was guilty and undone. He carried within his

breast a burdened and well-nigh broken heart. And that was one purpose Christ had in mind when He "grasped" Paul—to show him how peace could be found by showing him the true secret of righteousness. Paul had been trying for "righteousness" in the wrong way. He had been trying to set himself right with God on the score of his own merits. Christ showed him a more excellent way. He revealed to him the infinite love and grace of God, bearing in the Cross of His Son the pain and punishment of the world's sin. He bade Paul trust that amazing grace; He bade Paul make that crucified Christ his portion. And Paul did so, with the result that sin lost its power to plague him, and the peace of God garrisoned his heart, and the thought of the great judgment-seat ceased to appal him. He knew himself accepted in the Beloved, and confidently looked for the Crown of Righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give him in that day. Christ "grasped" Paul in order to give him this peace of heart and joyous confidence.

This is the great evangelical experience. It is always the first result that follows the "grasp" of Christ. Christ "grasped" Martin Luther, done almost to death with fasts and penances which brought his soul no peace, with that great word, "The just shall live by faith," and Luther straightway entered into a life of triumphant and happy trust. Christ "grasped" John Bunyan, driven almost to distraction by a sense of his own failure and shortcoming, with that word, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and promptly the crushing burden rolled from off his back. Christ "grasped" a young girl in this church of ours not so many weeks ago, and that was the gift He brought her—a blessed sense of deliverance and peace.

She left my vestry with a radiant face, saying, "I am so happy now." And that is why Christ "grasps" men still. It is not a bit of use ignoring or minimizing sin. It is here, and we are all conscious of it. And do what we will we cannot get rid of it by any good deeds of our own. There is only one way of getting rid of it—and that is by the mercy and grace of God. And Christ "grasps" us to make us sure of that. When we come face to face and into actual touch with that loving Lord who carries still the print of the nails in His hands and the gash of the spear-thrust in His side, we get great peace of heart. We can sing—

> "Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
> Grace to cover all our sin."

"There is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus."

(2) In the second place, Christ "grasped" Paul *in order to make a saint of him*. Not simply to bring him peace of heart, but to make a new man of him in Christ Jesus. Paul was a great Pharisee, and the Pharisees constituted the pious party of Palestine. But there is all the difference in the world between the Pharisee and the saint. The Pharisee lives in the region of the mechanical and the external; the saint has his home in God. The Pharisee is known by his scrupulous observance of rite and ceremony; the saint is recognized by his loving and obedient heart. And that was what Christ "grasped" Paul for, to turn the Pharisee into a saint; to turn this man who lived in the region of the external into a devoted and consecrated soul. And that is exactly what Paul became. He became a great "saint." There is a little phrase which all the theologians tell us is eminently character-

istic of the Apostle Paul. It is the little phrase "in Christ." It occurs times without number almost in his Epistles. That was what life became for Paul after the great event of Damascus, it became a life "in Christ." Christ was the atmosphere that encircled him, the soil in which he grew, the air he breathed. He lived and moved and had his being in Christ. He let Christ take entire possession of mind and heart until he could say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Paul, as some one has said, is the "first in Christ," the chiefest and greatest of the saints. And it was to build his character up into the strength and glory which afterwards characterized it, it was to make a saint out of the Pharisee, that Christ "laid hold" of him in the way.

And that is why Christ "grasps" men still—not only to bring them the forgiveness of sins and consequent peace of heart, but to build them up into holiness and unselfishness of life. He lays hold of the sinner not to leave him a sinner with his sins forgiven, but to turn the sinner into a saint. He laid hold of Zacchaeus not simply to blot out the record of his oppressions and injustices, but to make a philanthropist of him; He laid hold of Mary not simply to wipe out the memory of her shame, but to make a pure woman of her; He laid hold of Augustine not simply to bring him forgiveness for his early profligacy and lust, but to make a mighty preacher and teacher of him; He laid hold of John Bunyan not simply to appease the terrors of his soul, but to make a brave evangelist and a writer of immortal books out of him. Christ lays hold of men, He "grasps" them not simply in order to bless them with forgiveness, but in order to create in them a holy character. Life is as the plastic clay, and many of us take a

fancy towards trying to shape and fashion it ourselves. And a poor thing we often make of it. When we have marred and broken and almost ruined ourselves, He comes and takes hold of us, and re-creates our ruined handiwork, our broken lives, into things of strength and beauty and grace. He makes us vessels meet for the Master's use. And that is why He "grasps" us—to make new men of us, to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

(3) And in the third place, Christ "grasped" Paul *in order to make a missionary of him.* Paul had great gifts and energies which he was using in the wrong service. The Latins had a proverb to this effect: "Corruptio optimi pessima." How shall I translate it? "The best things when perverted become the worst things." And the proverb is profoundly true. The greater and nobler a man's abilities, the more mischief he can do if his abilities are turned to wrong ends. This was exactly the case with Paul. He was a man of great gifts. But he was causing endless mischief because he was putting those great gifts of his to false uses. Christ "grasped" him in order to divert those great abilities of his into the right channels. He gave him his mission and his task at the very moment that He laid hands on him. "To this end have I appeared unto thee," the Lord said to the man whom He had so suddenly seized and arrested, "to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen Me and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." Christ appointed Paul his sphere and his business. He laid hold of him to make a missionary

of him, a missionary who had the world for his parish.

And to that work Paul gave himself. He felt he had no option in the matter. Necessity was laid upon him, and it would have been woe to him if he preached not the Gospel. He travelled all the lands between Jerusalem and Rome, and possibly Spain in the Far West. And those very qualities that made him the arch-persecutor, diverted into the service of Christ made him easily the first and foremost of Christian missionaries.

And that is why Christ "grasps" men still—not simply to bring them the sense of forgiveness, not simply to build up their own individual characters into strength and beauty, but to send them forth to serve others, to be evangelists and missionaries to the world, to be pioneers and soldiers of His kingdom. "He called Twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth to preach," so I read of the calling of the first disciples. He called them not only to privilege, but to service. He called them that "He might send them forth to preach." And it is for the same reason He lays His hands on men still —that He may send us forth. We are saved to serve. We are redeemed not for our own happiness only, but for the benefit and blessing of the whole world.

Paul's Answering Grasp.

And now I pass on to speak in just a sentence or two of *Paul's answering grasp*. Christ "grasped" Paul at the hour of his conversion, "grasped" him for a certain definite purpose—but Christ's grasp would have been in vain if Paul's grasp had not answered His. But there was a "grasping" on Paul's

side, as well as on the Master's. Listen again to my text, "I press on, striving to grasp that for which also I was grasped by Christ Jesus." Paul tried to "grasp" that for which he "was grasped," that is to say, he strove to make actual the ideals Christ cherished for him, he made it his own business in life to translate the purposes of Christ for him into the practice of the common day. Christ "grasped" Paul in order to bring forgiveness to him; Paul appropriated to himself the forgiveness thus proffered. Christ "grasped" Paul in order to make a saint of him; Paul made it the one business of his life to "grasp" at the saintly character; this one thing he did, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Christ "grasped" Paul in order to make a missionary of him. Paul in turn "grasped" at this glorious mission and determined to know nothing amongst men, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Paul's grasp answered the Lord's grasp. He made the Lord's purposes for him his own. And that is what made Paul the great Christian he became. His will answered the Lord's will. He embraced with all his strength and soul the plans his Master formed for him. He strove to grasp that for which he was grasped by Christ.

And this is the condition of great and worthy Christian living still. There must be a "grasping" on our side as well as on Christ's. He has laid hold of us for purposes of *forgiveness* and *character* and *service*. We too must lay hold on these gracious purposes of our Lord's and make them our own. Have we grasped that for which also we were grasped? I sometimes think we lay hold of Christ's great purposes with only a partial grasp. For instance, we grasp at forgiveness. We take to ourselves

the assurance of pardon and peace. But what about the saintly character? Do we strive to "grasp" this great purpose of Christ? Are we growing in grace? Do we honestly make it our business to make room for Christ in our hearts and lives? Is that our aim—to bring every part of our life into subjection to the law of Christ? This is why Christ laid hold of us—to make saints of us. Can we honestly say, "I press on, striving to grasp that for which also I was grasped by Christ"?

And then what about the Missionary Service? Christ "laid hold" of us because He wanted us to be His witnesses and preachers. It does not necessarily mean that we should go out to China or India or the South Seas—but every Christian is called to be an evangelist. The sphere may be within the walls of our own home. "Go home and tell thy friends what great things the Lord hath done for thee and how He hath had mercy on thee." Christ never laid hands on any one that he might possess his salvation as a kind of secret joy. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so! We have been saved to serve. We have been called that we might be sent. Have we made this purpose of Christ our own? Have we been evangelists, missionaries, preachers of the good news? Have we been soldiers of the kingdom? Have we been pioneers of the Lord's Empire? Have we striven to grasp that for which also we were grasped by Christ Jesus?

That is what is lacking amongst us to-day—our answering grasp to the grasp of Christ. My brethren, shall we make the Lord's design for us our own? Shall we here and now make these things our aim—to grow up unto Him who is the Head, even Christ; to be faithful witnesses of His redeeming grace?

There is no reason why, if we honestly grasp that for which we have been grasped by Christ, we should not become Christians like Paul, and with a Church composed of Christians like Paul we should not have to wait long till the earth was as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

XV

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

"*For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*"—2 Cor. iii. 6.

Perhaps I ought to apologize for reading out this great aphorism of the Apostle Paul's as my text, for I cannot pretend that I am going to preach directly upon it. And yet on the other hand it has a real and vital bearing upon what I am about to say. It is strictly relevant to the theme I want to discuss with you for a few minutes. Let me tell you what the theme is; and as we proceed with the discussion you will be able to judge for yourselves whether my text has or has not any relevancy to the subject under debate. I want to talk with you briefly upon the applicability of the laws of Christ as set forth, for instance, in the Sermon on the Mount, to the practice of our everyday life. Now this question whether Christ's laws were meant to be practised, whether indeed they can be practised under our modern conditions, is one that has caused serious difficulty to a great many earnest people. And, no doubt because I have come across people by whom the difficulty has been deeply felt, it has been much in my own mind of late. It was much in my mind during my recent holiday. You will think it a curious thing to bother about in vacation-time—but if I had one topic that occupied my thoughts during those brief weeks it was this. While out of the hurly-burly for a short space I thought of the men who were feeling this difficulty,

and I wondered what I could say, if not completely to solve the difficulty, at any rate to help them in face of it. They say the outsider sees most of the game. Detachment is often necessary to right judgment. And I thought that in the quietness of the lakes and the hills, I should find a better opportunity of arriving at sound and true conclusions than when plunged again into the rush and pressure of life at home. So this question was, as I say, the principle theme of my meditation during those three weeks. I put down in my notebook certain broad conclusions at which I arrived. And it is these conclusions I want now to give out to you. I feel a certain diffidence in doing so; perhaps I would have done better to keep them to myself for some time longer, and think over them a little more deeply—for nobody realizes more clearly than I do that my conclusions are imperfect, and that they leave a good part of the difficulty unsolved. Still they may remove some misconceptions and to that extent mitigate some of the difficulty—so I give them to you, without further apology, for what they are worth.

The Difficulty of the Question.

Perhaps, first of all, it is just as well that a word should be said about the real difficulty of this question. For it may seem to some that to ask, "Are Christ's words meant to be obeyed?" and "Can they be obeyed?" is to ask an unnecessary question. Why, of course, you say, Christ's words must be obeyed. That is the test of a genuine Christianity—obedience; and if a man does not obey he is not a Christian at all. Now it is very easy to say all that, and as a statement of a general principle I have absolutely no

quarrel with it. But it is when we try to reduce it to practice that our troubles begin. In fact I do not hesitate to say that it is those who most earnestly and honestly try to obey Christ who feel the difficulty of obedience the most. Let us take the Sermon on the Mount as embodying in brief compass the moral demand of Jesus, the ethic of the Christian faith. What are we to make of the Sermon on the Mount? Was it meant to be obeyed? Can its precepts be practised? About the beauty and glory of the ideal it bodies forth there is no dispute. I suppose every one would agree—unbeliever as well as believer—that it sets forth the ideal in its most perfect form. There have been other attempts to picture the ideal life. In the Old Testament scriptures, in the writings of heathen philosophers and writers, like Confucius amongst the Chinese, and Socrates and Plato amongst the Greeks, precepts and counsels can be discovered not unlike the precepts of this Sermon. But a comparison of the moral ideal as set forth in the Old Testament writings, or in the writings of heathen philosophers, with that which is embodied in the Sermon on the Mount only throws into stronger relief the incomparable grandeur of the latter. To use Bishop Gore's words, as a summary of moral duty the Sermon is complete—all others are fragmentary; the Sermon is pure—all others are mixed and partially corrupt; the Sermon is for free and grown men—all the others are for children and slaves; the Sermon is a word of authority—the rest are guess-work. I say about the unapproached and unapproachable grandeur of the moral ideal set forth in the Sermon all men are agreed—but the question is, is it practicable? It is easy enough to admire the Sermon; the real point is, can it be obeyed?

Now when it comes to the practicability of the Sermon wise men and good men differ widely. Sir Lewis Morris, the poet, feeling at once the beauty and impracticability of our Lord's demands, spoke of them as "sweet, impossible precepts." And in such a characterization of them I have no doubt the thoughts of many hearts stand revealed. They acknowledge the beauty and charm of our Lord's precepts; but they say they are "up in the air" and out of all relation to real life. They are too romantic and highly strained, and ask for too much. They are all right, they say, as an ideal, but they were never meant for "human nature's daily food." In fact they go so far as to say that if the principles here inculcated were put into practice there would be an end to society and to our modern civilization altogether. Good men, Christian men, have said as much as this. The late Archbishop Magee, for instance (who had a trick of straight and uncompromising speech), bluntly declared that the Sermon was impracticable and that its precepts and counsels were never meant to be literally obeyed.

On the other hand, here is a man like the late Count Leo Tolstoy declaring that the demands of the Sermon can and must be obeyed, and asserting that the failure of the Christian Church is due in large measure to this, that Christian people have not taken Christ seriously and have never addressed themselves honestly to the task of obeying His commandments. He himself, as you know, in obedience to what he believed were Christ's demands in this Sermon, abjured his rank as a nobleman, dressed as a peasant, lived the simple life, advocated and practised the doctrine of non-resistance. And however we may criticize Tolstoy's interpretation of Christ's demand,

simple honesty compels this acknowledgment: that no man impressed his fellows so deeply and in such vast number as this great Russian who took Christ seriously and obeyed Him literally.

So here you get the difference of view. As to the practicability of the Sermon, some say "Yes," and some say "No." And multitudes more who do not *say* "No" seem to take its impracticability for granted. So the difficulty is not an imaginary one; it is a very real one, and multitudes are sorely perplexed as to what their attitude ought to be. When good and wise men differ so widely it is hard for the average plain man to make up his mind.

Now what I want to do in the few minutes that remain is to suggest one or two considerations that may do something to mitigate the difficulties of the problem.

I start from the position that Christ *meant His words to be obeyed.* To imagine anything else is really to sacrifice Christ's character for earnestness and truth. When Christ uttered the precepts contained in the Sermon, He spoke in dead and solemn earnest. He was not letting off oratorical fireworks. He was not indulging in displays of paradox. He was not attempting to dazzle the crowd with clever and striking epigrams. Never did preacher preach with more tense earnestness than Jesus did. He was wrestling for human souls. I say any other view than this entirely gives Christ's character away. But as a matter of fact, He Himself leaves us in no doubt as to the seriousness of His intentions—for He winds up the Sermon, you remember, by that comparison of the man who builds his house upon the sand and the man who builds his house upon the rock. It is a kind of warning in advance against treating

the Sermon as if it were a piece of pretty fancy and nothing more. The precepts propounded in it were meant to be obeyed. The only person who really builds his Christian life on a firm and solid foundation is the man who hears Christ's words and does them. So let us dismiss from our minds once and for ever the idea that Christ spoke these precepts "for the fun of the thing." By such an imagination we dishonour Him and delude ourselves. Christ spoke these words because they were vital to the interests of men's souls and He meant them to be obeyed.

The fact is we entirely misinterpret the problem when we ask, "Did Christ mean these precepts to be obeyed?" What we ought rather to ask is this, "What exactly does Christ want us to obey?" We may take the obligatoriness of the commands for granted, it is only the interpretation of the commands we need trouble ourselves about. In the case of the Sermon on the Mount right interpretation is of vital moment. Much of the difficulty people have felt with regard to its precepts arises from the fact that they have put upon those precepts a narrow, literalistic interpretation which Christ never meant them to bear.

The Letter and the Spirit.

Starting then from the position that Christ meant His precepts to be obeyed, our first business is to be perfectly clear as to what Christ meant. And to be clear as to what Christ meant, we must learn to distinguish between *the letter of the command* and *the essential spirit of it;* for even of Christ's words it is true—the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. I do not mean that we are so to spiritualize these laws as to spiritualize them clean away. I do not mean that

we are to so etherealize Christ's commands as to get rid of plain, obvious, practical duties. What I mean is that it is our first business to try patiently and conscientiously to discover the exact and abiding significance of these various precepts. For when we look at them quietly and seriously it becomes quite plain that we cannot take them at their surface value. We must make allowance, for instance, for Christ's methods of speech. The Eastern loved the parabolic and proverbial form of speech. He was fond of stating his truth in bold, picturesque, uncompromising ways. Our Lord was almost typically Eastern in this respect. He opened His mouth in parables. In this Sermon His preaching again and again is proverbial in form. Now if you press a meaning upon every detail in a parable you land in absurdity; while if you insist upon the absolute truth of every proverbial expression you involve yourselves in hopeless contradictions. You are bound in the interests of truth itself to try to separate the spiritual principle from the literary form in which it is expressed. For Christ was constantly expressing Himself in startling and paradoxical forms—forms so startling and so paradoxical as to make it abundantly clear that they were never meant to be taken literally as rules and laws of conduct. The fact is, as Dr. Cox points out, our Lord was not in the habit of giving men maxims to which they were to give a literal obedience, but to promulgate principles which men were to apply under the guidance of His Spirit. He did not come to give a second and more minute external law, but to create a disposition, a spirit, a new attitude which in a sense should be a law unto itself. And perhaps, as Dr. Cox suggests, that was one reason why He put His precepts into such paradoxical form that men might

never be able to degrade them into mere maxims or rules.

Let me illustrate what I mean by taking a precept or two out of the Sermon for examination. Take first that staggering precept about "turning the other cheek." "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Now obviously our Lord did not mean that to be taken literally. He did not give a literal obedience to the precept Himself. When He was smitten on the face in the High Priest's hall, He did not turn the other cheek, He gently but firmly rebuked the smiter for his violence and injustice. And besides, a literal obedience to this precept would defeat the very object at which Christ was aiming. I agree with Dr. Dale that to do this literally to an angry man would be to irritate him to fury and provoke him to fresh violence. The "letter" in this case "killeth." We must get at the "spirit" of the command; and the spirit is this: that we must meet violence and rage not with rage and violence, but with meekness, friendliness, forgiveness. Or as Bishop Gore puts it, when nothing is concerned but our own pride and instinct for revenge, we had better take meekly some insult or wrong without seeking to defend ourselves. Retaliation and revenge are the practice of the world—forgiveness even until seventy times seven must be the practice of the Christian.

Take next the precept which says, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." As it stands, it reads almost like an order to indulge in indiscriminate charity. But that surely cannot have been what Christ meant. In all our Lord's dealings He ever sought men's highest good. Now indiscriminate

charity when it is indulged in is not a blessing to men, but a curse. It is a direct encouragement of sloth and thriftlessness. It disintegrates the character; it degrades far more than it delivers. William Law, the great mystic, took the command literally. He and his pupils distributed about £3000 a year in the little village of Kingscliffe. No one who asked was refused. But the effects were disastrous. In 1753 public complaint was made, and Law and his friends were charged with being, through their indiscriminate charity, the occasion of the miserable poverty of the parish. No! clearly, indiscriminate almsgiving is not enjoined. Jesus would agree with Paul that except a man work neither shall he eat. But what *is* enjoined is the spirit of self-sacrificing generosity. His disciples are not to turn a deaf ear to any cry of need. It does not follow that we shall give money to every beggar who stops us in the street. By so doing we may be only confirming in idleness men who ought to be compelled to work. We simply impoverish ourselves to injure others. But where we know need to be urgent and real, our help will be always forthcoming, and in the meantime we shall spare neither money nor pains to lift men and women entirely above the reach of poverty and care. A loving heart and a ready hand are the marks of the Christian—sacrificial generosity is the very spirit of his life.

Take one more example, "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth." It reads like a prohibition of thrift and provision for the future. Taken literally, it would seem to forbid the farmer to store his harvest in the autumn for the coming winter; it would seem to put the seal of its approval on those who squander their money as soon as they get it, who spend up to their means and perhaps beyond it, and who make

absolutely no provision for a rainy day. But that is not what Christ meant! What Christ meant was this: that our hearts should be entirely emancipated from the love of wealth—that our care should be not so much about our balances at the bank as about our credit in heaven. We have no right to read this as if Christ were inculcating improvidence; what He is bidding us do is to put first things first—not to make money the prime object of our striving, but to seek first the smile, the favour, the blessing of God.

And so I might go on illustrating—but enough has already been said. The first thing to be done is to disentangle Christ's meaning from the accident of its verbal expression. The difficulties about the practicability of the Sermon on the Mount arise in a measure from a literalistic interpretation of its precepts. I agree that a literal obedience is impossible. I agree that to interpret "Resist not evil" in Tolstoy's sense would inevitably end in anarchy. I agree that to give a literal obedience to the commands, "Swear not at all," and "If any man would go to law with thee and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also," would mean the destruction of law and order and of modern civilization as we know it. I agree that "to turn the other cheek" and "to give to every one that asks" would not banish revenge or poverty, but would probably intensify the one and aggravate the other. But then they were never meant to be literally obeyed. The fact that they land us in such obvious absurdities ought to have saved us from ever thinking they were meant to be literally obeyed. These precepts are not exact rules—they embody principles. It is the principle we must get at. The words are the mere husk, the truth they

enshrine is the kernel. A literal obedience would reduce our civilization to wreckage, but an honest attempt to apply the inner principles—kindness, truth, generosity, forgiveness, unworldliness—would convert our present imperfect civilization into the perfection and beauty of the Kingdom of God. "The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life."

But I confess that right interpretation does not remove every difficulty. I think the real difficulties of the Sermon on the Mount come in the application of its principles to our social life. For these principles have their social aspect. The Laws here propounded are laws for a kingdom—the Kingdom of God. But that Kingdom is not yet here—it is only here in promise and in germ. It is only here in the persons of those who profess to be its subjects. And those subjects are in a small minority. Now when the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, it will be possible and easy to give a complete obedience to the laws here promulgated. But what about to-day? The position is this: Christ's people find themselves members of an unchristian society. Can they, living in such an unchristian society, obey Christ's laws? That is the real difficulty. Of course if Christ's laws simply differed from the laws of society by demanding more, there would be little or no difficulty. Society demands abstention from wrongdoing; Christ demands active beneficence. Obedience to Christ carries with it, in such a case, the fulfilment of social duty. But sometimes the law of Christ and the usages of society are in antagonism, and it seems to be impossible to obey the one without at the same time disobeying the other. And that is the real crux of the problem. It is the *social,* not the *individual* applica-

tion of the Sermon on the Mount that constitutes the real difficulty.

Let me show by a couple of illustrations how real the difficulty is.

Take the matter of business. The question is often asked, "Can a man be a Christian in business?" Some men when they ask that question mean, "Can a man be honest, and square and straightforward in business?" Of course he can. If he cannot, he had better quit. But there is a deeper sense in which the question can be asked, and when it would not be so easy to give an answer: Can business itself be run on Christian principles? And I confess that to that question, it is not easy to give an affirmative answer. What is the essential spirit of Christianity? The spirit of love. We are to bear one another's burdens. We are to do to others as we would be done by. We are to love our neighbours as ourselves. Life for the Christian is not a mastery, but a ministry. What is the essential spirit of business? The spirit of competition; every man is for himself; business, as carried on to-day, is a terrific struggle for existence, in which the weak are driven to the wall and only the strong survive. The spirit of business and the spirit of Christianity seem to be in sharp antagonism with one another. And the question whether a man can enter our competitive system and at the same time fulfil the law of Christ is not an easy one to answer.

Take the question of war again. Now, without doubt, war is essentially antichristian. It stands condemned by precept after precept in this Sermon. It is a complete and absolute repudiation of the Christian spirit. But the kingdoms of which we are members still resort to war and use the sword. Now

the question comes—what is the Christian to do? Can a man be a Christian and a soldier? Can a man be a Christian and approve of war? The question arose quite soon. Some of the early Christians were drawn from the ranks of the military, and some of them threw down their arms and refused to fight because they believed it was against the law of Christ. It was, indeed, actions of that kind that brought upon the Christians the reproach of being "bad citizens." But the difficulty is a real one, and it still remains. The Quakers are against war altogether—though to be consistent they ought to refuse all taxes for armies and navies. I have no doubt the Quaker position is the ideally Christian position. But it puts us on the horns of this dilemma, that we can only be loyal to Christ by being disloyal to the State.

I could illustrate the practical difficulty from other points of view, but perhaps enough has been said to show that it is real enough. The heart of the problem is this: can a man fully obey the laws of Christ in the present condition of society? Can he be a complete Christian when the State is unchristian? I answer: I do not think he can. Society being what it is, and we being members of it, I do not think we can give Christ's laws a complete obedience. These are laws for the Kingdom of God—they are inapplicable to societies which are still "kingdoms of the world." Business being what it is, I do not think those engaged in it can entirely fulfil the Christian law; the National Government being what it is, I do not think a man can be at once a loyal citizen and an absolutely consistent Christian. What, then, is the duty of the Christian? Is he to leave business? Is he to repudiate his citizenship? He is to do neither. He is to remain in business. He is to use every scrap

of his influence to put business on a more Christian footing. He cannot do it entirely. And he cannot do it alone. If all Christian men were to try to run their businesses on the Christian principle of loving their neighbour, they would probably ruin themselves and bring chaos into all business relationships. Socialism may be more Christian than individualism —co-operation than competition—but an attempt suddenly and by a stroke to change the principles on which business is conducted would probably make our last state worse than our first. The change must come by the slow process of permeation. Let Christian men remain in business. Let them bring the Christian spirit and temper into it, and soon the leaven will leaven the whole lump and business can be conducted not only in a Christian spirit, but in full obedience to the Christian Law.

And he must discharge his duties as a citizen. Things are often done by States as such which are against the law of Christ. It is not the Christian's duty on that account to leave the State. He must stay in it to Christianize it. War is essentially unchristian. His proper action is not to refuse the taxes, but so to bring the Christian spirit into our public life that the nation itself shall become peace-loving and learn war no more. We can only make the Christian law applicable to our social, public, national life by Christianizing the whole of society.

You may think this is an advocacy of compromise. It is scarcely that. It is a recognition that on the social side there are limits beyond which the law of Christ cannot be applied. But to its individual application there are no limits. So far as our personal and private obedience is concerned there is no limit beyond that which our own self-love imposes.

Christ's law is hard, but there is nothing impossible about it. The laws of forgiveness, of charity, of beneficence—there is absolutely nothing to prevent us obeying them. And that will give us plenty to do. And if we personally obey these great laws of forgiveness and charity and love, we shall be paving the way for the possibility of a complete and absolute obedience.

XVI

THE TRUE GROUND OF REJOICING

"*Howbeit in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*"—LUKE x. 20.

To help you to understand the exact meaning of this verse, let me first of all set it in its proper context. The chapter opens with the account of the despatch of the Seventy on an evangelistic tour to every city and place whither Christ Himself was about to come. Before sending them forth, Christ had given them their instructions, and He had also equipped them with gifts and powers for their task. He had given them authority over all the power of the enemy. How long a space of time the tour occupied it is impossible to tell. The Evangelist drops no hint upon that point. But in verse seventeen he tells us of their return and their report. They came back in high spirits. They returned, Luke says, "with joy." Their evangelistic tour had been a triumph. Signs and wonders had attended their preaching. "Lord," they said, "even the devils are subject to us in thy name."

It was in response to that remark of theirs—spoken a bit boastfully perhaps—that our Lord uttered the words of my text. The disciples were rejoicing in the wrong thing. They were excited, exalted, elated at the thought of their own achievements. It was a joy, dangerously akin, as Grotius says, to pride. It was full of peril to the soul. Jesus bids them glory not

in what they had been able to do for others, but in the remembrance of what God had done for them. "Howbeit in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

To have one's name "written in heaven" means to be enrolled amongst the citizens of the heavenly commonwealth. The Bible represents God as keeping a list—a register, shall I say?—of His redeemed and accepted people. The Seer calls it the "Lamb's Book of Life." Men's names get written in that book, not of merit, but of mercy. And only they who have their names written in that book have any rights in the Father's house. "Into it," says John in his Revelation, "there entereth nothing that defileth or maketh an abomination or a lie, but only they whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

And that is the one solid and satisfying ground for human rejoicing, according to Jesus; not any conspicuous service a man may be able to render, not any great achievements he may be able to perform, but that God in His great mercy has written his name in that book, that He counts him among His children, that He gives him a name and a place amongst His ransomed and redeemed people, that He opens the Kingdom of Heaven to him and blesses him with eternal life. "Howbeit," said Jesus to these disciples, elated at the remembrance of what they accomplished on their tour, "in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Now this is a deep and pregnant, not to say startling saying, and it suggests a truth or two which we should do well to ponder and lay to heart.

Good Works and Personal Salvation.

First of all this—though I do not mean to dwell on it at any length—it is possible for a man to cast out devils in Christ's name, and yet not have his own name written in heaven. This solemn truth is clearly involved in what our Lord says here. These disciples of His came home exultant because of the power they had been able to exercise. "No," says Jesus, "do not rejoice in that. Rejoice that your names are down in God's book." The very antithesis implies that the one does not involve the other. A man may cast out devils without being himself a saved and redeemed soul. Our Lord implies as much here. But He has not left it simply to inference and implication. He has stated the truth frankly, clearly, unmistakably. He pictures a scene at the judgment. People approach His throne who say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name do many mighty works." The Judge does not deny their statement, or challenge their claim. What they said was true enough; they had done all that. Nevertheless, His response is this: "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." They had prophesied in His name, they had cast out devils and done many mighty works in His name, but, for all that, they did not belong to Him. The spirits had been subject to them, but their names were not written in the Lamb's book of life.

There was, at least, one example and illustration of this solemn and indeed tragic truth in this little company of disciples who came to Christ exulting because of their power over unclean spirits. Judas was amongst them. The spirits were subject to Judas. The name of Jesus was as powerful on his lips as on

the lips of Peter or of John. Miracles of healing were performed by him as by the rest. But Judas' name was not written in heaven. "Have not I chosen you," said Jesus, "and one of you is a devil?" Judas, in that little band of disciples, was not in his right company. Later, the real bias of his heart revealed itself: he sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and by that transgression fell that, as Peter put it, "he might go to his own place." And "his own place" was not heaven and the Father's house. The spirits were subject to Judas, but he made his bed in hell.

A man may be able to cast out devils and yet not have his own name written in heaven. A man may be used as the instrument of saving others without being saved himself. I know that, broadly speaking, a man's power over his fellows depends upon his character. Any suspicion of insincerity robs the most eloquent speech of its effect, and makes it no better than sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And yet it remains true that the spirit bloweth where it listeth, and, before to-day, God has delivered His saving messages by the lips of unsaved men. "We have the treasure in earthen vessels," says the Apostle. But it is not simply in earthen vessels that the treasure is conveyed; it is sometimes conveyed in defiled and polluted vessels. Balaam was an evil man; he cast a stumbling-block in the way of the people of Israel, and led them into grievous and shameful sin, for which he was slain in the high places of the field. And yet Balaam is spoken of as a prophet of the Lord: to him God spoke, and through him He proclaimed His blessings upon Israel. The preaching was of God, but the preacher was himself unsaved.

And there has been many an unsaved preacher since Balaam's day. History makes it abundantly

clear that God accomplishes His great miracles of redemption oftentimes through men who are not themselves redeemed. In Sunday School and pulpit, men have been used to turn others to righteousness; the spirits of evil have been subject to them, and yet events have proved that their names were not written in heaven. So let no one build on the fact that he is a successful teacher or preacher or Christian worker. We may cast out devils in Christ's name and yet the Lord may say, "I never knew you."

In fact, spiritual success brings with it a subtle peril to the soul. The popular preacher, for instance, stands in a position of deadly danger. His very success may make him puffed-up, boastful, vain. He may come to worship his own eloquence and power, and forget his God. He may come to lean upon his own achievements and accomplishments instead of on the grace of God, for, after all, it is not because of any merits of ours we get our names written in heaven. When we have done our best we are but unprofitable servants. We owe our place in the heavenly commonwealth to the undeserved mercy and love of God. On that mercy let us depend. Let not success and prosperity beget pride in our souls. Even if God should use us to turn many to righteousness let us not boast of it, but humbly say, "Simply to Thy Cross I cling," lest this tragic event should happen to us, that after we have preached to others we ourselves should be castaways. "In this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Now let me pass on to discuss what is, after all, the main truth inculcated by this saying of our Lord's, viz. the true ground for gladness. The Seventy were rejoicing for the wrong reason. They were rejoicing

over the power they had been able to exercise, and the good they had been able to do; Jesus bids them rejoice over God's goodness to them in writing their names in His list of chosen children. Perhaps I can illustrate the truth which was in Christ's mind by a brief series of contrasts. Let me begin with this one.

Gifts and Character.

The true ground for rejoicing is not *gift,* but *character.* "Lord," said the Seventy, "even the devils are subject unto us in Thy name." That was a matter of *gift.* Christ had bestowed the power upon them when He sent them out to preach. "In this," said Christ,—in the possession of this gift—rejoice not. "But rejoice," He went on, "that your names are written in heaven." That is a matter of *character.* I know that heaven in the last result is all of grace—the grace of God. But the grace of God begets a certain character.

You remember that striking verse in St. Paul's letter to Titus, "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world"? That is always the effect of the grace of God where it is really received—it issues in a sober, righteous and godly life. It creates a certain character. And it is only men and women of that character who have their names written in heaven. "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." "Without are the dogs and the sorcerers and the fornicators." The people whose names are written in heaven are the people of transfigured heart and life—those who love the Lord and follow Him. That is the thing to rejoice

in, says Jesus. "Rejoice not that the spirts are subject unto you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Rejoice not in gifts, but in character.

By some strange perversity of judgment, men have always been inclined to make more of gifts than of character. They set more store by the clever and brilliant man than they do by the good man. Genius gets more consideration than holiness. Position counts for more than piety. The world does homage and pays worship to its Byrons and its Sheridans, to its peers and millionaires. Even the Christian Church is not entirely innocent of the same fatal sort of misjudgment. I read about the Church at Corinth in this Book, for instance. It was a Church that worshipped "gifts." The people gloried in the possession of the gift of prophecy or the gift of tongues. They thought far more of these gifts than they did of piety and character.

But in the long run, the only things worth boasting about and rejoicing over are the things which count in the sight of God, the things that fit us for the inheritance of the saints in light. And what counts in God's sight is not gift, but character. Genius, title, fame enable a man to cut a great figure in society—but they confer upon him no rights in heaven. "The redeemed shall walk there." Knowledge, tongues, prophecy were worthless, Paul told the Corinthians, apart from the loving heart. In God's sight gifts are nothing, character is everything! My brethren, we need to pray to be delivered from the worship of the tawdry and the flashy. We are in danger of being led astray, even in these days, by undue admiration for gifts. It is character that really matters. "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever," wrote Kingsley in a young lady's album. It is a hackneyed line, but it conveys a vital truth. It is

the things that stand the test of eternity; it is the things that qualify us for the heavenly life that we ought to covet. And it is goodness that does that. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Not gifts but character. "In this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Service and Standing.

Let me pass on now to say this: the true ground for rejoicing is not *service*, but *standing*. "Lord," said the Seventy, "even the devils are subject unto us in Thy name." They were rejoicing over the service they were able to render and the good they had been able to do. "In this—in this service—rejoice not," said Jesus. "But rejoice," He went on to say, "that your names are written in heaven." Rejoice in your *standing* in the sight of God, your *status* in the heavenly commonwealth.

Now at first it strikes us as strange that Christ should bid us rejoice in our standing rather than our service. Our own personal status seems a meaner thing to rejoice over than the good we have been able to do to others. It seems like turning religion into a selfish thing and making the supreme end of life the salvation of one's own soul. And this emphasis on the salvation of one's own soul is anathema to our present age. We are living in communistic days when, as Tennyson says, "the individual withers and the world is more and more." And the result is we have become communistic even in our conceptions of salvation. It has become the fashion now to criticize the *Pilgrim's Progress*, with its picture of Christian escaping for his life from the City of Destruction and

making his painful way to the City Celestial, as giving a false conception of the religion of Jesus. Superfine people pour cheap scorn upon such an old hymn as that which begins—

> "When I can read my title clear,
> To mansions in the skies."

They say that is reducing religion to a kind of glorified selfishness, and that the real Christian is so concerned in helping others that he has no time and indeed no need to care for his own soul.

Now with reference to the modern depreciation of the need of personal salvation and the emphasis on service, I have these two or three simple things to say—

(1) It is a complete reversal of the Bible order. In the Bible, personal salvation comes first. To get right himself with God is a man's chief concern; to work out his own salvation must be his constant care. This is the only possible order. There is a great deal of rather muddied thinking in the popular altruism of the day. What we need to learn is that there can be no real love for others apart from a genuine self-love. We must know what salvation means ourselves before we shall ever be eager to save others. The man who never cares for his own soul will speedily cease to care for the souls of others. As a matter of logical and necessary order standing comes first, service comes second.

(2) In the second place, the Bible, by giving the primary place to personal standing in the sight of God, far from reducing religion to a kind of glorified selfishness, does the very opposite. It leaves absolutely no room for self anywhere. It is when a man glories in his service that he is magnifying self. When a man says that he is so busy serving other

people that he has no time to bother about his own soul, when he says that his deeds must speak for him —he is setting self at the very core and centre of things. He is exalting his own achievements and accomplishments. His so-called unselfishness is only self-trust in disguise. But when a man rejoices in his status, there is no trace of egotism in it; self is repudiated and denied, for status is not of a man's winning—it is a gift of God's bestowing.

(3) And in the third place, status is, as a matter of fact, the only thing that brings a man solid satisfaction. "To be able to read one's title clear," is the only real and unfailing source of gladness. Jesus was absolutely and entirely right—the true and, in the long run, the one and only ground for rejoicing is not service but standing. I know the joy of soul that comes when God uses us to do a little good in the world. It is a blessed thing when God permits us to help one another on the heavenly way. But when we have done our life's work, I do not know that we shall boast much about what we have done. I do not think that the thought of our service will then be the ground for our satisfaction. We shall feel at the best we have been unprofitable servants. What we shall rejoice in then is the thought that, in spite of all our unprofitableness, God in His great mercy has for Christ's sake given us a name and a place amongst His people.

One of the greatest of the Scottish Covenanting preachers was David Dickson. God had mightily used him in strengthening faith, and had given him multitudes of souls as seals to his ministry. But when David Dickson came to die this is what he said with his very last breath to John Livingston, his friend, "I have taken all my good deeds and all my

bad deeds and cast them in a heap before the Lord, and have betaken me to Jesus Christ in Whom I have full and sweet peace."

And that is what we shall all do when our time comes. In the flush of life and strength we are apt to pride ourselves upon our services and to make much of them, but when the light of the eternal world begins to beat upon us, we shall feel they are all too poor and unworthy to mention in the presence of our Lord, and we shall betake ourselves humbly to Christ and trust ourselves only to Him. We shall rejoice then not in any achievements of our own, we shall rejoice only in this, that—

> "He died that we might be forgiven,
> He died to make us good,
> That we might go at last to Heaven,
> Saved by His precious Blood."

That the spirits were subject to us will bring us no gladness; we shall rejoice simply in this, that for Christ's sake, our names are written in heaven.

Merit and Mercy.

And I finish by saying this—it is really only a variant of what I have been saying under the last head —the true ground of rejoicing is not our *merit* but God's *mercy*. "Lord," said the Seventy, "even the devils are subject unto us in Thy name." That was a case of *merit*. They were glorying in their own works. "In this," said Christ, "the thought of your own merit —rejoice not. But rejoice," He went on to say, "that your names are written in heaven." That was a case of *mercy*. "Rejoice in that," said Jesus, "in the mercy which in spite of all folly and failure and sin, redeems and forgives and saves."

In the long run there is no other ground of rejoicing. I know that all down the centuries men have sought a sort of salvation by works. They have sought to earn their salvation by the good deeds which they have done. Paul tried it. Luther tried it. But they found no satisfaction or peace that way. "Wretched man," cried Paul after all his strivings after righteousness, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "Oh, my sin, my sin," cried Luther after all his penances and fastings, "who shall take away my sin?" They found no happiness or peace in the thought of their own merit, but they found a perennial spring of triumphant gladness in the thought of God's abounding mercy in Christ. They made no mention of the spirits who were subject to them, they simply rejoiced that for Christ's sake their names—unworthy though they were—were written in heaven.

Grace, not merit, is the one solid ground for gladness. We are able to rejoice not at the thought of what we are, or have done, but at the thought of what God is, and what He has done. You remember, perhaps, the story of the passing of Bishop Butler. From one point of view God never gave a greater gift to his Church in England. He has taught generation after generation of Christian preachers. Yet the Bishop was troubled on his death-bed, and the thought of his own surpassing services brought him no peace. He asked his chaplain, who was standing by his bedside, to say something to him for his comfort, and the chaplain repeated that verse of St. Paul's, "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "But," said the Bishop still troubled, "how do I know that He came to save me?" "The Scripture also says, my Lord," replied the chaplain, "that whosoever

cometh, He will in no wise cast out." And the great Bishop went quietly to sleep, rejoicing in a mercy that rejected and excluded none.

And that measureless grace is the ground of our gladness too. There is no permanent ground of gladness in merit. "In the course of justice none of us should see salvation." But there is abounding and abiding ground for gladness in the thought of grace.

> "Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
> Grace to cover all my sin."

Merit we have really none to plead—for we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. But the infinite grace which gave Christ to die can forgive and redeem and save to the uttermost. Let us simply trust that "grace." It is our only, but it is our sufficient hope. In this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you—but rejoice that by the infinite grace and forgiving mercy of God your names are written in heaven.

XVII

THE DIVIDED HEART

"*Unite my heart to fear Thy name.*"—PSALM lxxxvi. 11.

THE first book that brought Robert Louis Stevenson wide-spread recognition and something like popularity was the book which he entitled *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The story itself is characterized by all Stevenson's fondness for the bizarre and the uncanny and the horrible. But it was not the story that gave the book its vogue—but rather the serious study of which the story was but the expression. Essentially the little book is a study in the duality of personality. The public was not slow in recognizing this. Preachers, especially, saw that here was a vivid and arresting discussion of the old problem of the human heart, and they literally preached the book into fame. The hero of the book, as you remember, is a certain Dr. Jekyll. Dr. Jekyll, at the time he is introduced to the reader, has won name and position for himself. He is wealthy, learned, distinguished. But the Dr. Jekyll whom the world saw—benevolent, brilliant, irreproachable—was not all there was of him. There was another being within him—evil, cruel, sensual, always craving for ugly and debasing pleasures. In the course of his scientific researches Dr. Jekyll discovered a potion by which he was able to give expression to the evil personality within him in a separate identity. He became literally a changed man, shrunken in figure, deformed in build, and of a

countenance so sinister as to fill all who looked upon it with aversion and disgust. And to this changed identity expressive of the evil principle within him, he gave the name of Edward Hyde. For a time he rejoiced in his discovery, for when the craving for sensual pleasure was strong upon him, all that he had to do was to change himself into Edward Hyde and he was immediately beyond the recognition of all his friends, and when he had had his fill of such debasing pleasure, all he had to do was to resort once more to the potion and he was at once transformed back again into Henry Jekyll the great scientist, to whose name no breath of slander had ever attached itself. And so Stevenson gives us the picture of one man with two personalities—now Dr. Jekyll and now again Mr. Hyde, now delighting in reading religious books, and now writing blasphemous comments on the borders of the pages; now engaged in deeds of philanthropy and now taking a fiendish delight in cruelty and murder.

There is no need for me to follow the story into detail—though I know of no more impressive lesson upon the enslaving power of sin than the tragedy in which it culminates. Dr. Jekyll went out into the park one day and sitting upon one of the seats fell asleep. When he awoke he found he had in his sleep, involuntarily, been metamorphosed into Mr. Hyde. It needed a potion once to effect the change. Now evil had become dominant, supreme, irresistible. Edward Hyde—the beastly and the vile—mastered and destroyed Dr. Jekyll, and not all the potions he could concoct could turn him into the genial, gracious gentleman of other days. In all of which Robert Louis Stevenson is absolutely true to the solemn facts of experience. It is at his peril that any man indulges

the lusts and passions and evil desires that seethe in his soul. They grow by what they feed upon. They become strong, tyrannical, irresistible—so that this tragedy may happen, when a man wishes to put away the evil uses of a life, when he wishes to say a final good-bye to all shameful practices and habits and turn to a life of honour and purity and truth, he may find these evil habits have him in their grip—as Tennyson puts it—they from all his life shall rise and say, "Thou hast made us lords and canst not put us down."

But it is not to the tragic peril of enslavement to the lusts which we indulge that I want to call your attention just now, but to this suggestion of the *duality of personality,* which is the real basis of Stevenson's story. The wonder-working potion, and the miraculous change of face and form we may dismiss—they are merely part of the story-teller's outfit. But the duality of personality is far more than the imagination of a novelist, it is a fact of human experience. We are not single, we are double. Perhaps we are more than double. The poor demoniac at Gadara felt that he was a multitude. When asked what was his name he replied "Legion: for," said he, "we are many." "We," you notice, not "they." The evil beings within him had become identified with himself. It was a broken, divided, discordant personality of which he was conscious. And if we are not conscious of being a multitude, at any rate we are conscious that we are not single. We are not like our Lord's cloak—all of a piece, woven without seam throughout. We are, at least, double. Ever since sin entered the world human nature has been divided and discordant. We are conscious of being pushed and dragged in different directions. We can dis-

tinctly hear two different and contradictory voices—both of them our own. The heart is a perpetual battlefield. There is a Higher Self and a Lower Self, and these two personalities (shall I call them) make ceaseless war within us.

There is a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde within each one of us. The only difference I would make in Stevenson's statement of the case is this: we are not Dr. Jekyll at one time and Mr. Hyde at another, we are at one and the same time both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It is not a case of being altogether good at one time, and altogether bad at another, it is a case of good and bad being engaged in a ceaseless struggle within our souls.

I say this matter of a dual personality is a fact of experience. It is also a truth of Holy Scripture. Indeed, Stevenson's book at bottom is nothing but a dramatic rendering of the seventh of Romans. Paul was well enough acquainted with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. They loom large in his writings—only he does not call them Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, he calls them in one place the "new man" and the "old man." In another he speaks of them as "the spirit" and "the flesh." And they loom large in his writings because they lived in his own soul. He declares in that moving seventh of Romans—which is the chapter in which he discusses in fullest detail this matter of dual personality—that on looking into himself he found two opposing principles at work. He found, first of all, a law of God in which he delighted after the inward man; but he found also a different law in his members which brought him into subjection to sin. The law of God—that was the Dr. Jekyll part of him; the law of the members—that was Mr. Hyde. And between these two there was incessant war. You can

hear the clash of the conflict in a sentence like this, "For the good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practise." So conscious was Paul of this wild discord, of this ceaseless battle in his soul, so shamed was he that Mr. Hyde so often got the better of Dr. Jekyll, that flesh so often triumphed over spirit, that in his agony he cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

Now the remembrance of Stevenson's book and of Paul's great chapter were both brought back to me by the sentence of my text. "Unite my heart," cries this Psalmist, "to fear Thy name." "Unite my heart!" Behind that prayer lies the recognition that his heart was not one, it was two. It was not single, it was double. It is the prayer of a man who was conscious of inward strife. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the flesh and the spirit, the new man and the old man, were struggling in his soul. It is the prayer of a man who knew there could be neither peace nor power for him so long as he had a divided heart. Unity is the condition of peace. And so he prays for a united heart, a heart made one; and the unity he desires is unity of the right sort—unity in the love of what is holy and true and good. And so he prays for the final expulsion of the Mr. Hyde within, he prays for complete deliverance from the old man with his deeds, he prays for the entire extinction of the evil in his own soul, "Unite my heart to fear Thy name."

The Fact of the Divided Heart.

Now I want to go on to say that all this about the duality of personality, of which Stevenson writes in his book and Paul in that great and tragic chapter,

we know by personal and individual experience. We are well acquainted with the divided and discordant heart. We are not single, we are complex. Man is a strange blend of good and evil. Heaven and hell are both within his soul. When he first came from the hand of God, according to this old Book, his nature was single and simple. But ever since sin entered the world, he has been double and discordant. On the one side of him he is made in the image of God, and he hungers for the God in whose likeness he is made. "My soul is athirst for God, the living God," is the cry not only of some saintly Psalmist who lived centuries ago, it is the cry of man as man—wherever he is found. There are infinite potentialities of goodness in man; there are unquenchable aspirations after holiness. There is a Dr. Jekyll side to every man. But there is also another and a very different side to human nature. There is a sort of taint in the blood. There is a twist and bias towards evil. Foolish and superficial people have been in the habit of scoffing at the doctrine of original sin. But "original sin" is not an invention of the theologians. It is one of those terrible truths which experience teaches. If we are born with a certain measure of the spirit of God within us, we have within us also a certain principle and power of evil. Mr. Hyde is as real as Dr. Jekyll. It is not a case of a fair field for the good. There is a lower nature which is always battling against the higher. The heart is a divided empire. As Paul puts it, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh."

Look out upon the world, and everywhere you will find evidence of the truth of what I am saying. It is a world of men of divided hearts. The evil

principle that fights against the good and disputes its rule—the world, the flesh, the law of the members, as the New Testament calls it, "Mr. Hyde," as Stevenson personifies it—takes many a different guise. In the case of some it takes the form of *love of money*. Mammon divides the soul with God. That was how the case stood with the rich young ruler. There was something in him which cried out for God. But there was something else in him too—of which, perhaps, he was not completely conscious—and that was the love of money. And when he was called to choose between his money and his God, he went away sorrowful, the victim of a divided heart. And that is the guise many a man's private and peculiar Mr. Hyde takes still—love of gold. Gold is the enemy of the good. The craving for the treasure on earth makes men forget the treasure in heaven. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven."

And in the case of others, it takes the form of *love of pleasure*. That is how the case stood with the Prodigal in the story. Before he departed for the far country a terrific battle had taken place in his soul. On the one side was ranged his sense of duty and his love for his father, and on the other the clamant and insistent lusts of the flesh. And these clamant and insurgent lusts of his won the day. He gathered all his goods together and took his departure into a far country—the victim of a divided heart. And that is how the case stands with multitudes still—their particular Mr. Hyde is a craving for sensual pleasure. The "flesh" lusteth against the spirit and, in the case of numbers, overcomes it.

And even in cases where the pleasures indulged in are not in themselves sinful, they are allowed unduly to absorb the soul. The prevailing passion

for amusement is sterilizing the soul for thousands and robbing God of His due. In their inordinate devotion to self-gratification, men encroach even upon the quiet of the Sabbath, and Sunday golf, Sunday tennis, Sunday motoring, Sunday bridge are becoming increasingly common. They cannot entirely stifle their aspirations after God, but these other and baser affections enter in and divide the heart and dwarf and mar the life.

The "divided heart"—we all suffer from it. No heart amongst us all is absolutely single, entirely devoted to God. "There is none that doeth good, no not one." We are divided in our allegiance. There is a Mr. Hyde always contending for the mastery with our Dr. Jekyll. Sin, self, the world in some form or another disputes the dominion with God. And this divided empire, this duality of personality is the source of all our weakness and misery and discontent. "Unite my heart," therefore, is no obsolete prayer. It is a prayer that exactly meets our case. It is a prayer that expresses exactly our deepest and most urgent need. For consider the following effects and results of a divided heart.

The Effects of the Divided Heart.

(1) *A divided heart means an unhappy heart.* That statement is a truism, it is almost a platitude. If the heart is in a state of war, of course there cannot be peace. The condition of perfect happiness is a perfectly united heart. That is the secret of Heaven's bliss. Every trace of evil, every root of bitterness has been taken out of the heart of the saints, they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," they are what we can only aspire to be

down here, "ever, only, all for God," and as a result they have "fulness of joy."

And I can believe that if it were possible for a man to become completely devoted to the love of evil, some sort of peace (even though it were the peace of desolation) might be his possession too. But, as a matter of fact, no man ever does become entirely evil. No man does become absolutely devoted to sin. He cannot forget the good. He may try to stifle conscience, but occasionally Mr. Recorder, as Bunyan puts it, will awake and call back to remembrance better things. Here you really have the secret of the misery and discontent of those who live a worldly life. It is a commonplace that that life brings no happiness. I remember reading somewhere a remark a bishop made about the result of his observations in Hyde Park. It was on the faces of the idle rich, he says, who rushed by in their motors, or lolled luxuriously in their carriages that he read the deepest signs of unhappiness and woe. And here is an English observer making practically the same remark about the visitors at Carlsbad—it was the rich pleasure seeker who struck him as looking bored and blasé and utterly wearied. The fact is, a man may plunge into the worldly life, but he cannot entirely forget. There is something in the heart that makes continual protest and cries out for better things. And peace is impossible so long as the heart is a divided heart. That is why the old Book says, "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked."

(2) In the second place, *a divided heart means an ineffective life*. "Out of the heart," said our Lord, "are the issues of life"; but when the heart itself is divided and discordant, the life that issues from it cannot, in the nature of things, be strong, vigorous,

positive, aggressive. In the actual experience of life, attempts at Dual Control have rarely, if ever, worked well. We tried Dual Control along with France in Egypt. But the condition of things became intolerable, and it had to be brought to an end. Dual Control invariably begets friction, vacillation, hesitation, indecision. An army put under the command of two generals suspicious of one another and intent on thwarting one another could only have one history, and that a history of humiliation and defeat. Unity of mind, concentration of purpose are essential to effectiveness of action.

And it is like that with the individual life. A divided heart dooms a man to ineffectiveness. The man who is swayed by conflicting impulses, and is now on this side and now on that, counts for nothing. The Bible type of the man of divided heart is Reuben. He had good emotions and impulses, but a weak will. He was all on the side of good at one moment, and then allowed himself to be swept into evil the next. And so Reuben became a thing of contempt and scorn. "Unstable as water," said his dying father about him, "thou shalt not excel." "He that doubteth," says the New Testament Apostle in a stern and almost menacing passage, "is like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed." Like the surge of the sea, like the leaf of autumn—at the mercy of every gust: light, trivial, impotent, ineffective. There may be room for the "cross-bench mind" in politics—there is absolutely no room for the "cross-bench" character in morals. To count on the side of right, we must be entirely devoted to the right. The men who have done things, the men who have left their mark on the world, the men who have counted for righteousness, were men of single mind and definite purpose. "This

one thing I do," said the Apostle. There was no division or hesitation or vacillation about him. He knew nothing amongst men, save Jesus Christ and Him as crucified. He was a man of single aim and concentrated purpose. That is the condition of effective service. But what can a man do to make the world better who is himself divided between good and evil? That is the reason why the Christian witness in these days is so largely ineffective. We are not "out and out." We are not entirely consecrated. We are not Christ's first, last, and all the way between. We have compromised. We try to serve two masters. We have a divided heart, and because of our divided heart we give an ineffective witness.

Christians who were wholly Christian would soon convert the world; and in view of the small impression we are making on the world without, there is no prayer we need more urgently to offer than this, "Unite our hearts to fear Thy name."

(3) And yet, once again, *a divided heart is unworthy of our God.* Our God is a great God, and He is God alone. He is, moreover, as the Old Testament puts it, a jealous God. His glory will He not give to another. He will not share the dominion. He will not divide the empire. He is a jealous God; He is exclusive; He is intolerant of a rival. Listen to the sweeping and uncompromising claim He makes: "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." "All thy heart, all thy soul, all thy mind, all thy strength!" He demands to be served with every part of the nature. It is not the affections and emotions alone that He wants. He wants the intellect as well—"mind," as well as heart and soul. And it is not the affections and the intellect

alone He wants, He wants the will as well. Some men try to put God off with their affections. Their sensibilities are easily touched; their emotions readily respond to the religious appeal. And some try to put God off with a sort of intellectual assent. They profess the great Christian doctrines. They give God their "minds." But God demands not only the emotions and the mind, but the will as well. He asks to be served with the "strength." Emotion and creed must be translated into life. And He asks to be served with *all* of these various parts of human nature. *All* the heart, *all* the soul, *all* the mind, *all* the strength have to be offered to Him. He consents to give no inch of foothold to Diabolus in Mansoul. God will be all or nothing. "Aut Cæsar aut nullus." He will not accept a divided heart. That we may offer to God the only sacrifice He will accept, we need urgently and constantly to pray this prayer, "Unite my heart to fear Thy name."

The Secret of the United Heart.

And now I finish by saying these two things: (1) It is only in the fear of God you can really unite the heart. You cannot unite the heart in the service of sin. The Divine that is in it will always be in a state of protest and rebellion. And you cannot entirely get rid of the Divine out of the soul. It is the Divine that makes the soul. It is in its very fabric and essence. You would have to destroy the soul itself before you could get rid of the Divine element in it. And the result is, you can never *unite* the soul in the service of self and sin. You can never reduce a man to the single personality of Mr. Hyde. That means that in a life of selfishness and sin there can be nothing

but misery and discontent—the misery and discontent born of a divided heart. But you can unite the heart in the fear and love of God. The soul is eternally and essentially Divine. But the soul is not necessarily and eternally sinful. Sin is an intrusion in the soul. It came in against the will of God. You cannot get rid of God, but, blessed be God, we can get rid of sin. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. The only chance of a united heart, therefore, is in the fear and love of God. When the heart returns to the fear and obedience and love of God, it returns to its true allegiance. It returns to the service for which it was made. Our Lord, who had a perfectly united heart, knew what it was to enjoy a perfect peace. And as we follow Him along the path of complete consecration, we too shall know more and more of the peace of God which passeth understanding. "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked." No! But "great peace have they that love Thy law."

(2) And the second word is this: the gracious power of our Lord *can unite the most divided heart.* Stevenson's book ends on the note of tragedy. Edward Hyde gets the better of Dr. Jekyll. The man who began by encouraging his evil self, found he could not change back into his good self. "Here, then," is the concluding sentence of Stevenson's book—a sentence which forms part of the statement of Dr. Jekyll himself, in which the whole horrid secret is declared—"as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end." The conflict between the two personalities ends in the triumph of evil. But I turn to the seventh of Romans and I read of another and far happier ending. Paul knew

the misery of a divided and distracted heart! "Who shall deliver me," he cries, "from the body of this death?" And then he answers his own question with something like a shout of triumph: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord"! Jesus had done that for Paul. He had helped him to conquer his sin, to get rid of his sin. He had brought peace to his soul by "uniting his heart to fear God's name."

And what He did for Paul He can do for every one. My brethren, no potion in the world can turn you from a bad man to a good one—but the grace of Christ can. And I preach that mighty grace to you. The hearts of some to whom I am speaking may be so divided that they well-nigh despair of themselves. The power of sin is so strong within them that they despair of ever getting the mastery over it. But there is no need to despair. Christ can repair, restore, unite the heart. Where sin abounds, His grace doth much more abound. He can save to the uttermost. He can expel our Mr. Hyde. He can free us from our sins. He can bring these broken and divided hearts of ours back to their lost unity in the faith and love of God. Call Christ to your aid! Let Him work His gracious will upon these divided and discordant hearts of ours—then—

> "Mind and soul, according well,
> Shall make one music as before—but vaster!"

XVIII

DRIFTING

"*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them.*"—HEB. ii. 1.

"THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest heed," says the Apostle, and the "therefore" with which he introduces the exhortation refers back to the argument of the preceding chapter. The counsel he gives here finds its justification in what he said there. If what he has said in the preceding chapter is true, then the duty he inculcates here follows as a logical and inevitable necessity. What, then, is the argument of the preceding chapter? In a sentence it is this: an argument to prove the superiority of Christ over the angels. The Jews were wont to glory in the fact that their holy law was given to them through the mediation of angels. But the Gospel came not through angels, but through Christ, Who was God's only begotten Son. If the Jews considered it obligatory to pay earnest heed to the law which was ministered by angels, there was all the more reason why the Christian should pay earnest heed to the words of the Gospel. Behold a greater than Moses was here. Behold, a greater than the greatest of the angels was here. God had spoken unto them in His Son.

And if I may pause, just at this point, it is to interpolate this remark. This is why we need to pay heed to the Gospel message still. It is a message of

infinite moment. It is like no other message in the world. It is not to be classed with the messages of the great teachers and reformers whom the centuries have produced. It is the message which the infinite and eternal God has given to the world in the Person of His only begotten Son. That is why Christian folk who have realized what it is, feel constrained to go forth and proclaim it to the uttermost parts of the earth. Buddha, Mahomet and Confucius have given forth their respective messages, it is true; but lo, a greater than Buddha, or Mahomet, or Confucius is here. At best, Buddha, Mahomet and Confucius were but servants; but the Gospel is the message of the Son, who knows God's mind and can fully reveal His heart. It is the final word. It is the message of eternal life. And that is why we, who live in a land where this message is freely and constantly proclaimed, ought to give the more earnest heed to it. This is the message which, of all others, deserves and ought to have our attention. I notice what heed men pay to the sayings of philosophers and thinkers of our own time. They listen reverently to Mrs. Besant, they pore over the writings of Mrs. Eddy, they pay heed to the whirling words of Nietzsche. There is no need to speak scornfully of these modern guides, though they expose themselves to criticism on many a side. This only I will say, that when men and women spend more time on the study of their writings than they do on the study of the Gospel they show they possess no sense of proportion. Every other message sinks into insignificance compared with this. This is a message which vitally concerns our souls; this is a message which reveals to us the things that pertain to our eternal peace; this is the one message in the world that matters. It is of infinite and

immeasurable importance we should pay heed to this message, for this gives us not the guesses and speculations of any man, however gifted, but the blessed and life-giving Gospel of the only begotten Son of God.

But all this—about the importance of giving heed to the Gospel message because it is the message not of a man, but of God's Son—although it is in the text, I pass by without further notice. It was not so much the "therefore" at the beginning of my verse, as the clause with which it closes, that drew my attention, and it is to that closing clause I wish to draw yours. The Apostle, you will notice, is not satisfied with his argument for "paying heed" to the Gospel drawn from the uniqueness of Christ's place and Person; but in the closing sentence of the verse he introduces another. The Apostle exhorts his readers to give the more earnest heed to the Gospel, not simply because it is the message of God's Son, but also for this reason—that if they did not give earnest heed to it, they were in danger of drifting away from it altogether. "Lest haply we drift away from them." "The image," says Bishop Westcott, "is singularly expressive." The idea is that there are certain currents of opinion and habits and action which may insensibly carry men far from the position which they ought to maintain. In the case of the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter was written there was the influence of the Jewish atmosphere which they breathed, there was the appeal of the Jewish ritual in which they had been born and bred, there was the steady pressure of their Jewish friends. All these things threatened to sweep these Hebrew Christians from their moorings. The set of the current of the life in the midst of which they lived was away from the Gospel. The danger to which

they were constantly exposed was the danger of "drifting." The whole of this Epistle, as one of the commentators points out, is a warning against "drifting," and an appeal to steadfastness and perseverance. The Christian faith, he implies, can only be kept and maintained by constant and persistent effort. "The price of liberty," said Burke in a well-known phrase, "is eternal vigilance." The price of keeping any precious thing is perennial alertness and care. Men's most cherished possessions cannot be left to take care of themselves. When they are so left, they are in danger of being lost. And it is so, this writer says, with the Christian faith and the Christian confidence. They can be kept only at the cost of constant attention and care. There are influences constantly at work which tend to carry men away from their Christian anchorage. These Hebrew Christians lived in the very midst of such influences. They could only maintain their Christian position by resolute effort and unceasing struggle. "Therefore," he says to them, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them."

The Danger of Drift.

Now I want to go on to say that the *danger of drift* is not an ancient danger simply, it is a modern danger also. Drifting is as deadly a menace to us as it was to the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter was addressed. It is true that the influences that subtly and insensibly work upon us are not exactly the same influences that worked upon them. But the essential point to notice is this: that though the influences have changed their form, they

are still at work, and they exercise upon us to-day a steady and persistent pressure which, if yielded to, will carry us far from the Christian position.

There are two truths about life which it is necessary we should remember, which, indeed, it is at our peril we forget. The first is this: there are strong currents in life, and we are all more or less in the grip of them. Life is not a land-locked pool, calm and still, in which a boat, though left to itself, will retain its position day after day. Life is a river, a stream, a sweeping tide. During my holiday I read a book about the sea by Mr. Frank Bullen, and one of the most interesting chapters in it was a chapter about "currents." Mr. Bullen says there are mighty rivers in the sea, rivers mightier than any Amazon, whose course can be traced for hundreds of miles. The mightiest and most familiar of these ocean rivers is that which we call the Gulf Stream. It pours, a mighty flood, out of the Gulf of Florida, and sweeps out into the Atlantic a broad belt of warm and genial water, and it is owing to its genial effects that these islands of ours are the fertile and pleasant places we know them to be, instead of being as barren and sterile as Labrador. There is another mighty ocean river, Mr. Bullen says, which flows round the Cape of Good Hope, and ships making in a certain direction put themselves in the line of its current and make use of it to help them on their way. And in exactly the same way there are great drifts and currents in life. There are "streams of tendency." Custom, habit, social convention, intellectual atmosphere—they exert steady and continuous pressure upon us. There is no such thing as taking it easy and standing still. We are embarked on the bosom not of a pool, but of a river.

The second thing to remember is this: a river never runs upwards, it runs downwards. We are in the grip of life's currents, and those currents, if we yield to them, will never carry us to the heights of honour and glory, they will sweep us into the depths of dishonour and shame. The Bible is perfectly frank and outspoken about the tendency of life's drift. I pick out two sentences penned by two Apostles who did not always see eye to eye, but who are absolutely agreed in their estimate of life's currents. "The friendship of the world," says the Apostle James, "is enmity with God." "The carnal mind," says the Apostle Paul, echoing the sentiment, "is enmity against God." The fact which both Apostles are insisting upon is this, that the influences of the world in which we live—the influences of society and custom and fashion—are not favourable to religion, they are hostile to it. They do not help a man to be a Christian, they make it hard. They do not lift him nearer God, they carry him away from Him. There is no need to prove the Apostolic statement. We all know it—from experience. Life is a river, and its course is downwards and away from God. And the danger we are constantly in is this: that we should insensibly succumb to the world's subtle but persistent pressure, and so should, almost without being aware of it, "drift away" from the Christian faith.

My brethren, I will be perfectly frank with you, and say, I am far more afraid of "drift" than I am of deliberate and avowed apostasy. We get troubled sometimes about the efforts put forth by the advocates of so-called "free-thought." We are afraid they will poison the minds of our young people, and induce them to repudiate the faith. I will not go so far as to

say there is no danger on that side, but I am persuaded we greatly exaggerate the peril. It is not on the side of the aggressive atheism of the *Clarion*, or the vulgar blasphemies of Hyde Park Lectures that our real danger lies. Our danger lies on the side of the fascinations and seductions of the world. "The deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word." Surrender to the "stream of tendency" in the midst of which we live is the real menace. Intellectual unbelief may have slain its thousands; but careless, heedless, unconscious "drift" has slain, and is slaying, its tens of thousands. I remember very well that when we took a religious census of my old city of Lincoln, there were not half-a-dozen papers returned in which the people avowed themselves to be atheists. All of them professed to belong to some Church or other. But I knew there were hundreds and thousands of people in the city who, for all the respect they paid to God or account they took of Him, might just as well have been atheists. Practically they were living without God and without hope in the world. They had not formally repudiated God, but they had "drifted" clean away from Him. And that is what I am afraid of as far as some of you who are listening to me now are concerned. I am not afraid that you will, with a sort of swagger, sign yourself "Atheist" as Shelley did, I believe, in the visiting-book of one of the Italian hotels. Blatant and boastful atheism of that kind has gone out of fashion, and is well-nigh as extinct as the dodo. But you may lose God without repudiating Him or formally denying Him. And what I am afraid of is that, by yielding to the subtle influences of the world in which you live, you should almost insensibly "drift" away from God, until you discover

yourselves to be without God at all. For I repeat—life is not a pool, but a river, and the river runs not up, but down; life is a sweeping tide, and the set of the tide is not towards God, but away from Him. "Drifting" is delightfully easy, but it is full of deadly danger to the soul.

Drift in Religion.

Now let me examine a little more closely the religious tendencies of our own day—that we may realize the more clearly the perils into which "drifting" will carry us. I believe "drifting" is perilous in any department of life. Sometimes I think that "drift" is our most deadly political danger. Is that not what we are doing in this matter of armaments? People excuse the waste of national resources on munitions of war on the ground that conflict between ourselves and Germany is in the long run inevitable. That word *inevitable* simply means that we are going to surrender to certain passions and prejudices and ignorances. Which again means that we are going to allow ourselves to "drift" into the unspeakable horrors of brutal and bloody war. That is where "drift" will land us. But it is no more the business of a nation than it is of an individual to drift. The obligation is laid upon nations just as surely as persons to "seek peace and ensue it." And if instead of drifting, we deliberately and resolutely seek peace, we seriously and earnestly desire to promote a good understanding, there is no reason in the world why Germany and England should not dwell together in honourable friendship and concord.

And sometimes I think that "drift" is our greatest danger here at home. The "social problem" needs

serious and radical handling. At present we are "drifting." We fly from one makeshift to another as fresh troubles arise. We deal with symptoms instead of with the real roots of disease. There does not seem to be a definite purpose and a settled aim in our legislation. The ship of State seems sometimes rudderless and at the mercy of every passing wind. It is a position full of peril. What we need is to see the haven at which we should be, and steadily steer for it. "Drifting" can only end in disaster.

But if "drifting" is perilous on the national scale, it is doubly perilous as far as the individual religious life is concerned. I do not pretend to be making a complete analysis of the religious situation of our day, but I think I can discern two strongly marked "streams of tendency," and they are both perilous to the soul.

(1) The first is the "stream of tendency" back from *religion to ritual*. That was the "drift" of which the writer of this Epistle was so much afraid, and against which the whole of this Epistle is a warning. These Hebrew Christians were in danger of drifting back from the simple spirituality of the Gospel to the ritual of Judaism. They felt the appeal of the visible Temple, and the altar and the sacrificing priesthood; as we should say, it appealed to their æsthetic sense more than the unadorned spiritual worship of the Christian Church. And then ritual was easier than religion. It was easier to sacrifice than to obey. Easier, more popular and perhaps more æsthetic—the Jewish ritual was all that, and so these Christians were in danger of "drifting" back into what this writer almost contemptuously terms the "beggarly elements" of the Jewish faith.

And the "drift" from religion to ritual sweeps

strongly through our life to-day. Our age has been marked by an amazing recrudescence of ritualism. The revival of mediævalism and Romanism has been the most surprising phenomenon of the past fifty years. And the man who "wants to be in the swim" almost inevitably tends that way. To begin with, ritual is easier than religion. To "observe the rites of the Church" is an infinitely easier thing than to give Christ the love of the heart and the allegiance of the life. Then it appeals to the sense of beauty. The worship of a Friends' Meeting House or a place like this seems bare and frigid and cold compared to the worship of a Church in which candles and incense and processions, and gorgeous robes, and exquisite music all make their appeal to the senses. And then, once again, it is fashionable. Society, that turns a smiling face to the Romanist and the High Anglican, looks sourly and unkindly upon such places as these which stand for the simplicity and spirituality of the Christian faith. And so the "drift" of to-day is away from simple religion to ritual. You can see one evidence of it in the way persons who want to be "in the swim" will leave Nonconformist Churches for the Establishment. But nevertheless, it is a drift that is full of deadly peril. For, after all, ritual is not religion. It is often the merest mummery of religion. Religion is not a posture of the body, but an attitude of the soul. The observance of all the rites and ceremonies that any Church may prescribe cannot save the soul—only faith in Christ and utter devotion to Christ can do that. The peril of ritual is that it blinds the soul to the real nature of God's demand. It substitutes form for life. The "drift" of to-day is back to these "beggarly elements"; but, perhaps, when you remember that it is the love of the heart God wants,

you will feel it best to resist the "drift" and cling to those Churches where man and his Saviour are brought face to face, and God is worshipped in simplicity and truth. That was the decision to which Browning came. You remember his lines towards the close of "Christmas Eve"—

> "I, then, in ignorance and weakness,
> Taking God's help, have attained to think
> My heart does best to receive in meekness
> This mode of worship, as most to His mind,
> Where earthly aids being cast behind,
> His All in All appears serene,
> With the thinnest human veil between."

(2) And then secondly, there is another "drift" which is yet more perilous, and that is a "drift" from religion altogether. I do not mean in the sense of its formal repudiation, but in the gradual extinction of interest and zest and faith. The "stream of tendency" in the midst of which we all live, is not favourable to religion. Our environment does not encourage our Christian faith. To bring what I am saying to the test of experience, take for illustration of what I mean the case of a young fellow away from home in business. The atmosphere of shop or office, as a rule, does not help him in his Christian faith. Of course I know there are differences between one place of business and another place of business, and it would not be fair to embrace all under one indiscriminate condemnation. And yet I know I am speaking the simple truth when I say that most young fellows have a hard fight of it to maintain their Christian profession. If they went with the stream, it is not to service or the Sunday school, or the prayer-meeting they would come—they would go rather to the public-house and the theatre and the music-hall. If they allowed themselves to "drift," that is the direction in which

they would be swept. They have to make a fight for it, they have to breast the current, they have to swim against the stream, if they mean to stick to their Lord and their faith.

And what is perhaps specially vividly illustrated in the case of the youth away from home is true, in some degree, of every one of us. The influences that play about us, do not encourage us in religion. They do not tend to carry us nearer to Christ, they tend to carry us away from Him. The "world," this all-pervading and encircling world, from which we cannot escape while we have breath, is enmity against God. And if we yield to its influence—if a business man allows money-getting to absorb his soul, if a woman allows the vanities of fashion to engross her heart—it is away from God and Christ and heaven and its glory we shall surely be carried.

My brethren, I warn you against the danger of *drifting*. Drifting is all the more perilous because of its insidiousness. It is all the more tempting because of its ease. It is a sore temptation to shout with the crowd and swim with the stream. Why should we be always in opposition? Why should we not do in Rome as the Romans do? Questions like that break from our lips almost angrily sometimes. But remember this—drifting never carried any one into honour or glory yet. Drifting never carried a man even to temporal success. Do you know what driftwood means? Driftwood is the name they give to those broken and shattered planks and timbers that the tide casts upon our shores. Bits of noble vessels gone to pieces they often are. And the world is full of human driftwood, noble vessels gone to wreck and ruin. The drunkard is just a bit of driftwood. The casual is a bit of driftwood. The ne'er-do-weel is a bit of driftwood. The remittance man of the colonies

is a bit of driftwood. They were full of promise when they embarked on life's ocean, but they allowed themselves to "drift" without settled purpose or definite aim, and there they are to-day—a tragic sight—cast up, broken, and shattered on the shores of life. Men do not "drift" even into worldly prosperity. But what matters most is this—men never "drift" into the Kingdom. The set of the tides that sway and swirl about us is not towards heaven, but towards the pit. Have you noticed how every appeal to embrace the Christian life implies that it involves effort and strain and sacrifice? Listen to some of them: "Take up the Cross, deny thyself daily and follow Me." "Deny thyself daily"—that does not suggest swimming with the stream, it suggests breasting the current. "Agonize to enter in by the strait gate." "Agonize" to enter in. A man does not slip or glide or drift into it, he wins his way in only by sweat and strain. "Gymnastize thyself unto godliness." Strip to it—that does not suggest that we can slip into the Kingdom without trouble, it suggests the strenuous exertion and panting breath of the athlete. And what Scripture thus states in plain language is verified and confirmed by the history of the saints.

The men who have taken the Kingdom were not drifters, they were swimmers. They did not surrender themselves to the current, they breasted it and resisted it. They did not shout with the crowd, they dared to take their solitary stand. The "drift" in Babylon was all in favour of idolatry and king worship; but Daniel defied the drift. He went on praying with his window open towards Jerusalem three times a day. The "drift" amongst the governors of Palestine was all in favour of certain oppressive practices; but Nehemiah defied the "drift." Fashion and custom did not in-

fluence him. "So did not I because of the fear of the Lord." The "drift" in England here two hundred and fifty years ago was all in favour of concession and compromise; but those brave men who gave up their livings on St. Bartholomew's Day of 1662 defied the "drift." At the price of poverty and imprisonment they stood fast in the Lord. And by their steadfastness, by their refusal to surrender to custom and convention and fashion, they won the Kingdom and God's "well done."

There is no other way. You can never "drift" into holiness. You can never "drift" into goodness. You can never slip or slide into the Kingdom. You can slip and slide into baseness and contempt. You can "drift" into evil. The worldly, sinful life costs no one an effort. Any weakling can live it. All a man needs to do is to float with the stream and shout with the crowd. "Facilis descensus Averni" ("The path to the pit is easy and down hill"). But we "*climb* the steep ascent of heaven." The road to dishonour is broad, and it is easy travelling; the way of godliness is narrow and steep, and it is only by dint of labour and effort we breast the hill. But the Kingdom is worth the trouble. In the long run nothing matters but the Kingdom. In the long run nothing is of any account but to gain Christ and be found in Him. I put it to you, what satisfaction will it be at the last to have gone with the current if you find the current has taken you clean away from God? "Drifting" may save you a little sacrifice and self-denial, but what will it profit you if by "drifting" you find you have lost your soul?

But how are you to withstand the "drift"? This is the counsel the writer gives the Hebrew Christians: he bids them pay the more earnest heed to the things

which they have heard. He bids them counteract the pressure of the world by reminding themselves continually of the truths of the Gospel. He bids them seek for strength to resist "the stream of tendency" by reminding themselves the more constantly of God and eternity and the judgment. And that is the best way to counteract the "drift" still. The world gets power over us only when we forget God. To practise the remembrance of Him is the best way to withstand the drift. My brethren, I tell you I always begin to be afraid when I see or hear of people neglecting the "means of grace." When I notice a man begin to neglect the prayer-meeting, and to satisfy himself with once a day on Sunday; when I hear of a young fellow neglecting his Bible and omitting his prayers, I need nothing further to tell me he is "drifting." I know some who began to neglect worship and prayer who have now drifted far. But the "drift" can never sweep us away if only we remember God. So give the more earnest heed to the things that you have heard. Observe the Sabbath: keep it for worship. Frequent the assemblies of God's people. Put yourselves in the way of hearing God's word. Read diligently that word for yourselves. Be instant in prayer. Keep the great Judgment-seat always in view. "My feet had almost slipped—until I went into the sanctuary." He almost drifted away, but he went to the place where he heard about God and he was enabled to breast the current. "Pay earnest heed to the things you have heard." We drift because we forget: we shall stand fast if only we remember. And above everything else take a grip of Christ. Stand fast in the Lord, dearly beloved. I know the pressure of the world is strong. I know the tides that would sweep us into sin are powerful and fierce. But I know

this also, that swift and strong though the currents are that would sweep us off our feet, Christ is able to make us stand. There is a "drift" in life, but there is something the drift cannot affect, and that is the Rock. And Christ is such a rock. Plant yourselves on Him and you shall rest and stand in your lot at the end of the days.

XIX

CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCES

"I say unto you, In that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. There shall be two women grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left."—LUKE xvii. 34, 35.

I HAVE taken my text from that great discourse in which our Lord speaks of His Second Coming. I am not going to pretend that the meaning of every sentence in this sermon is quite clear to us. But while there may be some obscurity about the details, the main lines of our Lord's teaching are plain enough. Let me set them down in a few simple sentences.

First of all, He declares plainly and emphatically that a day is coming in which He will take unto Him His great power and reign—when He will reveal Himself to the world as God's chosen King. That day, when it comes, will be as sudden and as unmistakable as the lightning flash which shines from one part of heaven to the other. That day will overtake a world to a large extent unready. It will be in the day of the Son of Man as it was in the days of Noah or of Lot. Men will be so immersed in their secular pursuits as to be heedless of the things that pertain to their eternal peace. The consequence is, the day of the Lord will be a day of revelation, discrimination, and separation. Just exactly as Noah and his family were saved out of the flood, just exactly as Lot was

saved out of the ruin of Sodom, so those who are prepared to welcome the Lord's appearing shall pass with Him into the light and life of the Father's house, while the unprepared shall be left in the outer darkness. This discrimination will separate the closest of friends and will sunder the most intimate of human relationships. "The strangest separations," as Dr. Plummer remarks, "will take place between comrades, according as one is fit to enter the kingdom and another not." "In that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. There shall be two women grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left."

Now, what I want to do is not to speak about our Lord's Second Coming, but about the great and eternal truths which are suggested by the particular verse I have read out as my text. I find three truths assumed or plainly taught in the text. They are these: (1) The fact of a coming discrimination. (2) That discrimination will be made according to character. (3) Character is, in the last resort, quite independent of circumstances. These three truths are not truths I am trying to read into my text. They are legitimate, and indeed necessary deductions from it, as I hope to show. It is, then, about these three great and vital truths which my text suggests that I wish to speak with you for a few minutes.

The Fact of Discrimination.

First of all, then, let me call your attention to the fact of *a coming discrimination*. The day of our Lord's Revelation, according to the unvarying testi-

mony of Scripture, will be a day of crisis, a day of separation, a day of judgment. Even when He was here on earth Jesus acted as a principle of division. He sifted and sundered men. He was set, as Simeon said, for the rise and fall of many in Israel. He set the father against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law. Time after time I read in the Gospels notices like this: "So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him." "There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words." Instinctively, in the presence of Jesus, men ranged themselves into two camps—some were for Him and some were against Him. He was a principle of judgment. Wherever He went there was a crisis, a sifting, a selection and a judgment.

And the same thing is to happen on the world-wide scale when He appears in glory. His appearance in Palestine was local. But then, every eye shall see Him, and the result of the vision will be separation and judgment. Divisions will take place amongst the most closely connected. Comrades and intimates will be sundered, for "There shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other left."

Now, about this great fact of future discrimination I should like to have said two things had there been time. But, seeing I want to keep my sermon within reasonable limits, I must content myself with simply mentioning them.

(1) The first is this: such a judgment *is a moral necessity*. We have almost conspired to drop the word judgment out of our speech. Even the Christian pulpit is strangely silent about it. I suppose it is

the result of the spread of the spirit of Humanism amongst us. I suppose people think that the idea of judgment somehow clashes with and contradicts the great truth that God is Love. The truth is really quite the opposite. You destroy God's love when you deny judgment. For love is a holy thing, a pure thing, and an austere thing. Love which should refuse to judge and condemn and punish is not love at all; it is a limp, flabby, unmoral, if not immoral good nature. There is nothing we want more in these days than to moralize our ideas of love. The temper of our age is sentimental, not ethical. The temper even of the Christian Church is sentimental, not ethical. When we deny or ignore the judgment, we are simply giving God's character away. For to deny or ignore the judgment is practically equivalent to saying that there is one event to the good and the bad, to the pure and the impure, to the saint and the sinner, to John and to Judas. And that, I repeat, is to nullify moral distinctions: it is to demoralize the universe and to destroy the character of God.

If there is one thing certain it is this: if this world is a moral world at all, if our ethical distinctions mean anything, if there is any difference between right and wrong, there must be a judgment. For in this world justice is not done. Right is not always vindicated; wrong is not always penalized. The scales are not held true. Is this world a moral world? Must the Judge of all the earth do right? Then if one thing is sure, *this* is sure—"After this the judgment"; and we are simply playing a game of silly, and indeed wicked, make-believe with ourselves when we try either to ignore or forget it.

(2) The second thing is this: in that inevitable judgment Christ is *the infallible instrument* of

discrimination. The Scriptures again unvaryingly assert that in that final judgment Christ Himself is the Judge. Men are separated into the classes to which they really belong by their attitude towards Him. And there is nothing arbitrary about this. Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Goodness. When men are confronted with Jesus, the thoughts of their hearts are revealed; the real bias of the character is disclosed; the essential man is laid bare. Those who are honestly good love Jesus; those who are really evil hate Him. That is why judgment is associated with His appearing. The association is not capricious or accidental; it is necessary and moral. When Christ comes there will be a crisis, a sifting, a discrimination—"There shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left"—and that discrimination will be the ultimate judgment, for it will be a discrimination according to essential moral character.

Discrimination and Character.

And that leads me to say just a word about the second great truth I find suggested by my text, and that is (as I have just said) that *discrimination is according to character*. This truth is not stated in so many words, but it is clearly implied in the text. Two men are asleep in the same bed; two women are grinding at the same mill. The figures are meant to suggest not simply similarity, but identity of condition. As far as outward appearance went, there was nothing to choose between them. The eye could detect no difference. And yet in each case one was taken and the other left. What was the reason for the discrimination? Unless we are to write it down

as accident or caprice, it could only be due to this: a difference in moral character. And, indeed, we are left in no manner of doubt about it when we read the discourse as a whole. The reason for the discrimination was this: one belonged to the kingdom and the other did not. One loved the Lord and was ready for His coming, and the other did not. Behind the identity of condition there was a great moral difference. The circumstances were similar, the bias of the heart was different. And so it came about that the one was taken and the other was left. *The final discrimination is according to moral character.*

We divide our people up into classes, according to their external condition. We speak of the "upper classes" and the "lower classes"; we speak of the "leisured classes" and the "labouring classes"; we speak of the "professional classes" and the "business classes." All these divisions—and most of them are very silly,—are according to a man's external condition. Then we split ourselves up into Conservatives, Liberals and Labour men according to our political preference, and into Churchmen and Nonconformists according to our ecclesiastical convictions. Now these differences which loom so large before our mortal eyes, and which settle our place in human society, count for nothing at all in the eyes of God. He pays no heed to them. The Lord looketh not upon the outward appearance, He looketh upon the heart. Before opening the door of the kingdom of heaven, God does not ask whether a man was a lord or a labourer; He does not ask (as so-called Society does) whether he belonged to a profession or a trade; He does not ask—perhaps to the surprise of ecclesiastics like Lord Halifax and the Bishop of Zanzibar—whether he was Churchman or Dissenter; He simply asks where his heart was. Was

his heart set on right? In his heart did he love Christ? And that is why it comes to pass in the final judgment that there are first who shall be last, and last who shall be first.

And that is also how it comes to pass that out of the same class, out of the same church, out of the same family circle (where external conditions were precisely the same), the one shall be taken and the other left. The final discrimination is not according to earthly rank or wealth or learning, but according to moral character. Those who love Christ in their hearts shall be taken; those who lightly esteem Him shall be left.

Character and Circumstances.

The third truth I find suggested by my text is this: that *character is, in the last resort, independent of circumstances.* "The closest intimacy in this life," says Dr. Plummer, "is no guarantee of community of condition when the Son of Man comes." Here we get a picture of two men upon the one bed: the circumstances of the two are identical; they may well have been two brothers in the same home who have enjoyed the same measure of education, the same advantages or disadvantages, the same home discipline and training; but there is a measureless difference in their destinies—the one is taken and the other left. Here we get two women grinding at the same mill, each grasping one handle of the very same millstone; two humble women apparently with the same monotonous routine of daily toil; two women of the same class, the same occupation, the same interests. To outward appearance there was nothing to choose between the two, and yet one is for the marriage feast

and one is for the outer darkness. The one is taken and the other left. And the difference in destiny is due to a radical difference in character. Alike in their external circumstances, these people in their hearts were as different as black from white, as good from evil. You notice the implication. From precisely the same conditions men of totally diverse character may issue; that is to say, character is a regal thing and is free from the control of circumstances.

This is a truth I would like to enforce and bring home to heart and conscience if I could, because it is a truth which is tacitly, if not openly, challenged and denied. One effect of the enunciation of the evolutionary theory was an altogether new sense of the part played in the origin of species by heredity and environment. The inherited life, acted upon by the surrounding conditions, gives us the precise forms of life which we see. Now, heredity is out of my purview this evening. But about the doctrine of environment I want to say a few words. According to my dictionary, environment means the "surrounding conditions by which living forms are influenced." The doctrine of environment tells us that the precise character of plant or animal is conditioned and determined by the circumstances in which that plant or animal is placed. For instance, I hold a grain of wheat in my hand. There are potencies latent in that grain, but before the potencies become actualities the grain must find its proper environment. Locked up in a drawer, the grain remains a single grain and nothing more. But sown on the face of the brown earth, that grain will spring up and grow, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It grows and multiplies only when it finds its proper environment.

Or again. You plant a vine in the open air in England here, and it will either bear no fruit at all or else the grapes it does bear will be poor and small and sour. But in the balmier climes of Italy and Southern France and California the vine flourishes in the open air, and the grapes it bears are plentiful, sweet and luscious. The vine depends for its life upon the climate. Indeed, I may generalize that statement. It is not the vine alone that needs its special climate. Every country has its own plants and trees and flowers. The flowers of the Equator will not flourish in moist and chilly England; the flowers of England will wither and die in the sultry heat of the Tropics. Every plant, every animal needs its proper environment. Soil, climate, weather, geographical configuration—all, indeed, that we include under the term environment—have a great and decisive effect upon plant and animal life.

All this, of course, is a fact of observation, and is freely and frankly admitted. But some people, with a passion for uniformity, and denying the possibility of any break in Nature's processes, assert that the law holds good also of man. Man, according to them, is just a part of Nature, as the plant or animal is, and, like them, he is under the sway of Nature's laws. They tell us, therefore, that a man is made by the circumstances in which he is placed. Given a certain environment, a certain character is bound to result. As it has been epigrammatically put, if a man drinks beer, he thinks beer. Neither credit nor blame can therefore be rightly given to man for his character, for he is good or vicious according to his circumstances, and could not very well be anything else.

Now, I am not going to say that environment has

no influence upon character whatsoever. That would be to go to the falsity of the other extreme. It is quite obvious that it is easier to form a Christian character under certain circumstances than it is under others. It needs no demonstration that a boy or girl born in a Christian home and blest with Christian training has a better chance of growing up clean and honourable than a boy or girl brought up in a tenement in some filthy slum, where the very air is heavy with impurity, and overcrowding makes elementary decency impossible. And it rests upon us Christian people to create such conditions as shall make it easy to do right and difficult to do wrong, and so give every child a reasonable chance.

But while freely admitting as much as that, I repudiate and deny the assertion that a man's character is at the mercy of his circumstances. If that were true, man would be not better, but worse off than the brutes. For, like them, in that case he would be the sport and plaything of Nature's forces, but, unlike them, he would have the misery and agony of knowing it. If we are in the grip of forces over which we have no control, then are we of all creatures most miserable. To float on to misery and death unconscious of the fate that awaits us would not be so terrible; but to hear the roar of the cataract in front of us, to see its swirling waters, to realize that we are just helpless in the sweep and rush of the torrent—that would be terrible indeed. And such is the pitiable plight of man if his character is at the mercy of his circumstances. He is in the position of knowing his fate and being unable to avert it. I tell you if that were the case, our human reason and intelligence would be a curse and not a blessing, and the brute would be better off than we.

But it is not true. Man is not a part of Nature as the flower, the tree and the beast of the field. He is above Nature. He can and does control Nature. The fact that the materialist philosopher forgets or ignores or denies is that man is a spiritual being, that he is dowered with the gift of freedom, that he has the regal power of will. I am not going to stay to prove it. To the ordinary man it needs no proof. He knows that he is making choices every day of his life. He knows that, continually, alternatives present themselves to him, and that he selects the one and rejects the other. You might as well try to make a man believe in broad noon that there is no sun, as to make him believe that he is not free when he is making choices every day of his life. And by these choices character is made. There are certain things with which we are born. We are born with a certain physical constitution; we are born with a certain colour of hair and eyes; we are born with a certain family and home. These things we cannot help.

But we are not born with a character. The utmost we are born with is a disposition or a bias. We are not *born* with a character. We *make* character. And how do we make character? We make it by the choices and decisions of every day. We start with the raw stuff of character. But what sort of a character it shall actually become—whether unto honour or dishonour—depends on the shape we give to it. And we make and shape character by our acts, our choices, our decisions. "Every decision," as Canon Scott Holland says, "strengthens a bent, deepens a groove, determines a current, builds up a sentiment." And so character takes shape and form. It is not given, it is made. And we ourselves make it, just as surely as the statue is the creation of the sculptor's

hand and brain. It is not the product of circumstances. "Occasions," as Thomas à Kempis says, "test a man but do not make him." For character we ourselves are responsible, because the making of it is in our own hands.

That is why, out of the same set of circumstances, two men will issue who shall be poles apart in character. If it were true that circumstances and character stood to each other in the relation of cause and effect, identity of circumstance would issue in identity of character. But all history and experience tell us that is not so. The facts of life tell us that is not so. "Two men shall be in the one bed; the one shall be taken and the other left." Two men shall be in the circle of Christ's Apostolate, shall enjoy the same privileges of intercourse with the Lord, and one shall become the disciple whom Jesus loved and the other shall become the betrayer. Two sons or two daughters shall grow up in the same home and share the same advantages, and shall be separated by all the difference between goodness and wickedness at the finish. Two brothers grew up in the same home in London. One became Cardinal Newman, a Romish priest, and the other became Francis Newman, the extreme liberal theologian. There is a spot in the Rockies on the Canadian Pacific Railway which is known as the Great Divide. It is the backbone of the Continent. Two rivers rise together there, but one bends east and the other west. They rise together, but one river turns east and finds the sea in Hudson Bay, and the other turns west and pours itself at last into the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Together at the start, all the miles between the Atlantic and the Pacific divide them at the finish. Which is just a parable of life—

"So from the heights of will,
Life's parting stream descends,
And as a moment turns its slender rill,
Each widening torrent bends;
From the same cradle side,
From the same mother's knee,
One to long darkness and the frozen tide,
One to the peaceful sea."

Circumstances do not create character. We make character by using circumstances. In the last resort the secret of character is within.

"You may grind them both in the selfsame mill;
You may bind them heart and brow;
But the poet will follow the rainbow still,
And the other will follow the plow."

All of which, in its practical upshot, means this: our destinies are in our own hands; we can choose our own lot. We are not at the mercy of our surroundings. Favourable surroundings cannot make us good unless our will is set on right. "Have I not chosen you?" said Jesus; "and one of you hath a devil." Evil surroundings cannot damn us to defeat and shame. There were saints in Caesar's household. We make our own characters, we settle our own destinies, we decide our own fate. Let no one therefore shelter himself behind this plea of environment and whimper that he would have been a better man if he had had a better chance. You can be a good man; you can serve Christ wherever you are. It depends not on your circumstances, but on your will. Is your will set on right? Is your will set on following Christ? Then you shall tread the powers of darkness down and win the well-fought day. For it will not be your will alone pitted against the difficulties of your surroundings; it will be your will strengthened by the Almighty will of the Infinite God.

Here we are meeting together in the same church to-night, sitting in the same pew, singing from the same hymn-book, enjoying precisely the same privileges. And perhaps if Christ came one would be taken and the other left. Which would it be with you and me? The Lord knoweth them that are His—and those that are His are those who will to do His will. Would He recognize you as His? My brethren, choose Christ; whatever your circumstances, set your wills on doing the will of God, that you may not be among those who are "left" in the outer darkness when He comes to reign, but that you may be amongst those brethren whom He takes with Him into the glory of His heavenly kingdom.

XX

ON THE SLOPE

"*Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?*"—PSALM xxiv. 3.

I OUGHT perhaps to begin by saying that in my use of it in this sermon the verse I have just quoted is rather a motto than a text. For I have no intention of trying to follow the Psalmist in his train of thought. I have chosen the verse as my text for two words which it contains, and for a picture which those words suggest.

What I really have in mind is to follow my usual custom on the first Sunday evening of the New Year, and preach a sermon which, while I trust it may not be without profit to all who are here assembled, is designed specially for the young men and women who are present. I want to speak with them for a few minutes about the nature of the life they live, about the character of the journey in which they are engaged; and the particular point about life's journey which I want to emphasize I find suggested by the phraseology of my text.

Look at it for a moment. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" The two words I pick out of it, and for the sake of which I chose it, are the words *ascend* and *hill*. God dwelt, according to the imagination of the Psalmist, upon the summit of a hill, and there was no coming into His presence except by climbing. Now I have no doubt at all the

reference here is to an actual hill and an actual ascent. The commentators—or, at any rate, the majority of them—seem to be agreed that this may very well have been the psalm which was sung on the day when the Ark was transported from the house of Obed-edom to the City of David on Mount Zion. It was only quite recently that David had captured Mount Zion from the Jebusites. That famous stronghold he designed to make the capital of his kingdom. In it he meant to build a house for God, and to it, amid almost indescribable rejoicing, he carried the Ark, which was the visible sign and symbol of the presence of God. We must remember that the Jews had not attained to our conception of a universal God, spiritually present everywhere. They believed that God was only to be found in that house in which the Ark was enshrined. So, for the Jew, God literally dwelt on a hill—the holy hill of Zion—and the hill had to be ascended before men could stand in His presence. They had to "go up" into the courts of the Lord.

Now, under the illumination of the teaching of our Lord, who said, "Neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem shall men worship the Father," we have entirely emancipated ourselves from the notion that God's presence is limited to any one place. We no longer ascend any hill to discover Him. He is no more the God of the hills than He is the God of the valleys—as the Syrians discovered to their cost. He is spiritually present everywhere. As our old and familiar hymn puts it—

> "Where'er we seek Him, He is found,
> And every place is hallowed ground."

And yet, although in the literal sense there is no longer any "hill of the Lord" into which we must "ascend" if we would come into His presence, the

Lord still dwelleth on high, and we must climb if we would reach Him.

There is a great deal of talk in this old Book about "ascending" and "descending." Men can "ascend" into heaven; they can "go down" into the pit. Some one, I dare say, will tell me that all this is a relic of the times when men thought of heaven and hell as being fixed and definite places, heaven being a beautiful place somewhere up amongst the stars, and hell a dreadful pit somewhere beneath their feet. And these were the only alternatives open to men, either "up" into heaven, or "down" into the pit. Well, very likely the phraseology may be a relic of the more primitive times when heaven and hell were geographical terms. But setting all that aside, I want you to notice this (which is the essential truth behind the figure), the Bible conceives of life either as an ascent or a descent; men go up or go down. Those are the only options open to them—which again implies that, in the Bible view of it, life is not a level, it is a slope; it is not a flat, it is an inclined plane; it is not a meadow, but a hill-side.

And the Bible view is abidingly and eternally true. And that is the truth I would like to bring home to your minds and consciences on this New Year Sabbath evening: *we are all of us living on a slope.* The one thing we cannot do is to walk at our ease on the level. We must either ascend or descend. We must either climb—at the price of strain and struggle and panting breath—up to God and heaven and nobility of life, which good things are all "on high"; or we shall slip almost insensibly down into the pit of baseness and failure and contempt. Life is a slope, an inclined plane, a hill-side. Suppose we got that truth firmly into our minds, what results would issue?

Sense of Insecurity.

Well, first of all this, it would beget with us, as Mr. J. A. Hutton puts it, "that wholesome sense of danger and insecurity which is a great part of human wisdom and piety." You have noticed that the Bible often represents life as a "walk." Indeed, that word "walk" is constantly used as a synonym for life in its outward aspects. Well, if you will turn up the word "walk" in your Concordances, you will find that the sacred writers are constantly inculcating caution and care. "Ponder the path of thy feet," says the wise man. "Look, therefore, carefully how ye walk, not as unwise but as wise," says the Apostle Paul. Look carefully! Examine the ground! See that your foot is planted on a safe spot! Get good standing ground! "Look carefully (accurately, exactly) how ye walk." And what lies back of the Apostle's urgency? The recognition that we are all living and walking on a slope. It is not along a "soft and flowery glade" that we are travelling, but along a steep mountain-side, where a slip may end in death and destruction. I was in Zermatt one June. The time was full early for climbing. Most of us contented ourselves with sauntering about along the level, revelling in the profusion of flowers, and admiring the Matterhorn and the other white-robed giants from that safe distance. But some adventurous spirits, even while we were there, took the risk and climbed some of those mighty hills ribbed with ice and covered with snow. But I noticed what infinite precautions they took. They had specially nailed boots, they had ice-axes, they had ropes and they had guides. In the valley we could dawdle along in ordinary boots and without the help of any kind of guide. But it was another

and a different thing climbing the everlasting hills. When it came to climbing, nails, ice-axes, ropes, guides were absolutely essential. And the relics in the Museum, and the graves in the churchyards told us that, in spite of them all, the mountains took their toll. A slip, a false step on those icy slopes and death was waiting to snatch its prey. Well, that is what life is like—not a walk along the valley level, but a walk amid the ice and snows of the Alps. "Look carefully how ye walk." You are on the slope, and a false step may hurl you to your death.

Now, if you young folk could only get that simple and elementary truth into your minds, I believe it would make a vast difference. I believe that the majority of young people who go astray do so not deliberately, but through sheer carelessness and thoughtlessness. It is not that they wilfully choose the path of dishonour and shame. I do not believe any youth ever set out with the deliberate intention of becoming a drunkard or a profligate or a gambler. Had you suggested such a thing to him, he would have replied with that king of ancient story, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" They have found their way ultimately to the pit of shame in which at present they lie, because they forgot that we are all living on a slope. A visit to the public-house, the listening to an unclean story—it seems such a small thing! There appears neither harm nor peril in it! But it is just the first slip downwards, and when you begin to slip down a slope, it becomes very hard to stop; for once you begin to slip, the slope accelerates your downward sweep, and you may be in the bottomless pit of shame and despair before you know it. So I bid you young folk beware! A slip is no light and trivial thing! You are living on a

slope. Ponder well the ways of your feet. "Look carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise." The remembrance that you are living not on the level, but on a slope, will teach you to fear the first beginnings of sin, for that is what sin is—slipping, sliding, drifting down the slope.

The Impossibility of Standing Still.

And a second thing we should learn, once we really understood that we are all living on a slope, *is the impossibility of standing still.* We cannot go on day after day, month after month, year after year, on the same level, for the simple but obvious reason that life is not a level at all. It is an inclined plane, it is a hill-side. There are really only two alternatives open to us, we must either go up or go down. For the moment we cease to climb, we begin almost insensibly to slip back. This is a truth men recognize frankly enough in the secular business of life. There is no such thing in business as marking time and standing still. Unless men are continually revising their methods, renewing their machinery, keeping everything up to date, they inevitably get left behind in the fierce scramble of business life. Progress is the very condition of existence. Unless a man gets on and up, he has to get out. It is not a bit of use for a man in business to think he can just sit down and take his ease. He is on a slope. And unless he is climbing up, it is morally certain he will slip back.

The same truth holds good of life in general—physical life, I now mean. The great light which the discovery of the doctrine of Evolution has thrown upon life is this: that it is life *upon a slope*. Life has

never been a dead level. It has never been with life a case of "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be." Life is movement, progress, aspiration. Life is ever trying to perfect itself. "The struggle for existence," of which the scientists speak, is simply the evidence of life's upward striving. And strive it must, if it is to continue to keep its place. In the matter of physical life, there is no such thing as standing still. The creature that does not struggle upward inevitably slips backward. If it does not evolve it degenerates. Take one of Darwin's own illustrations. The almost numberless varieties of the tame pigeon with which we are acquainted are the result of careful crossing and breeding. But if our tame pigeons, with their beautiful varieties of marking and colour, were allowed to fly off and live wild in the woods, in a few years a remarkable change would come over them. All the birds, or rather their descendants, would become changed into the same colour. The variety, the beautiful colours, the peculiar graces of form would disappear. These were the result of nurture and domestication and constant care, and once the nurture and care ceased these things disappeared, and the birds sank back into that lower condition out of which with difficulty they had been evolved.

We have noticed the same thing in our gardens. The flowers we have in our gardens are again the result of effort and nurture and care. And they can only be kept in their glory by constant effort and care. Here is a rose, for instance. It has attained to a certain pitch of perfection. The gardener cannot say of it, "I am quite satisfied with that rose. I need not trouble any more about it. I will not try to improve it. I will leave it as it is." But the whole point is,

that if he leaves it, the rose will not remain as it is. Neglected and uncultivated, it is sure to degenerate into the primitive dog-rose of the hedges, out of which it has been by long training developed.

And as it is with physical life, so is it with the moral life. There is no such thing as standing still. Life is not a level, but a slope. And unless we are pressing upward we are sure to be slipping backward. "Hold fast that which thou hast," says John. Yes, but the only method of holding fast that which we have is to press toward the mark. It sounds paradoxical to say it, but we keep our place only by seeking to climb higher. The man who is content with what he is and where he is, is already on the downward slope. That is the meaning of the old story of Thorwaldsen the sculptor. He had made a statue one day which his friends praised as perfect. And as they complimented him, he admitted he could see no fault or flaw in it himself. And then he burst into tears. His friends were amazed and staggered by his grief. But Thorwaldsen told them what it meant to him. Hitherto he had seen in every statue that had left his chisel something that could be improved, and so he knew that his best work was not yet done. But the fact that he could find nothing to improve upon in his latest work was proof to him that there was no further advance for him, but that artistically his feet were already on the downward slope. And Thorwaldsen thought truly. When a man realizes his ambition, he is on the point of being left behind. That is why poets and moralists urge men to high ideals. "He builds too low who builds beneath the stars." "A man's reach must exceed his grasp, else what's heaven for?" It must be "up and onward" with us for evermore. We are not on

a level, but on a slope; and if we are not struggling upward, there is that within us which, with the relentlessness of gravitation, will drag us down into shame and failure and contempt.

The Struggle for Saintliness.

And another lesson we should learn, once we realized that we are all living on a slope, is that *there is no growth in goodness without struggle and strain.* The good things, the best gifts, the real riches—they are all "on high." To dwell with God we must still climb the hill. And climbing is never easy. I remember a walk I took to La Flégére, a view point on the hills at Chamonix, just opposite the Mer de Glace. The real mountaineer would not call it a climb. He would call it a saunter, a promenade. But even such a simple walk as that was not accomplished without toil and effort. I remember trudging up that zigzag path, up and up all the way, with a June sun blazing down upon me. My breath was coming short, and the perspiration was pouring down my face before I reached the summit. And life on the up-grade is not easy. It costs us sweat and struggle and strain. The Bible is perfectly frank about it. Every figure it uses to describe the life of holiness and service to which it summons us is a figure which implies effort and struggle.

Recall some of them. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," said Jesus. "Strive"—but that word is not strong enough! This is what Jesus said, "Agonize to enter in at the strait gate." There is effort almost to the point of blood at the very start. Listen to another word of our Master's: "Whosoever

would come after Me, let him take up his Cross, deny himself daily and follow Me." Let him take up his Cross! That does not suggest a pastime! It suggests a load, a burden, a terrific struggle. Listen to a word or two of the Apostle: "Suffer hardship with me," he cries, "as a good soldier." Life is not a parade, but a battle; it stands not for comfort, but conflict. The man who enlists for the brave and holy life must make up his mind for hardship and weariness and wounds. "Exercise thyself unto godliness," says the Apostle. Only again the word "exercise" does not reproduce the vigour of the Apostle's thought. Let me give it you literally, "Gymnastize thyself unto godliness." Whoever would live godly, has got to strip for the business. It is an athlete's life, with its severe and rigorous training, and its hard and exhausting effort that he is in for.

And it is the same truth which is set forth here—the Christian life is not a promenade, it is a hard and toilsome climb.

> "We climb the steep ascent of heaven,
> Through peril, toil and pain."

Men do not slip or slide into holiness—they only *slip* and *slide* into the pit of failure and contempt. The life of sin demands no effort. But goodness is hard. It is a battle, a wrestle, a race, a climb. And the reason why saintliness implies struggle is this: we live in a world whose spirit is "enmity against God," and we inherit a nature with a sort of bias towards evil, and tainted and burdened with unholy passions and lusts. Godliness cuts against the grain of the natural man. It implies and involves effort, hardship, sacrifice.

> "Our flesh and sense must be denied,
> Passion and envy, lust and pride."

And that is not easy! If things are easy with us, if there is no sense of strain about our lives, if the life we live is taking nothing out of us, we had better seriously consider which way we are heading. For God and heaven and character and all good things are *up*—they are on the *summits*, and we do not slip or slide into the heights, we *climb*.

Hardship, effort, toil, strain—the Christian life involves all that, but it is worth while! When we face things as they are, we know there is nothing else worth while. We buried a young officer of the Rhodesian Government, Stanley Worth by name, in our cemetery not long ago, with an almost heart-breaking sorrow that one so young and so useful should be so unexpectedly taken from us, and yet at the same time with a sense of exultation and triumph. For this is what he had been all through his brief life —a fighter, a wrestler, a climber. "I never knew," he wrote to me from Africa, "what the Church and home meant until I came out here; I am doing my best to keep my head on to temptation and sin, but it's mighty hard work." His head on! that was it. His eyes towards the summits! And how bravely and successfully he did it, I have heard Christian doctors who laboured out in that land say. Stanley Worth did not drift or slip or glide. He kept his "head on" to temptation and sin. He did not seek ease. He accepted the hard life. He was a "climber," a "fighter," from start to finish. And that is why we felt that curious sense of exultation as we buried him. We felt we were burying a hero. We felt we were burying one who had lived his life out, and fought his fight grandly, splendidly, magnificently.

When you stand at the graveside you know there is nothing worth while but that! You remember how

Stevenson in one of his essays (I think it is Stevenson, though I have not verified the reference) says that he met on the road one day a tattered old wayfarer, who described himself as an "Old Struggler," and how delighted he was with the appellation? Those are the only people for whom, in the long run, we can cherish any admiration; those are the only people to whom we can pay our tributes of honour or respect; those are the only people over whose very graves we can chant pæans—the "Strugglers," the "Fighters," the "Climbers." Are you among them? The great life is a life of struggle and strain. But it is worth while. "To him that overcometh will I give to sit on My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father on His throne."

A Principle of Judgment.

And finally, if we only realized the fact that we are all living on a slope, we should understand the *Divine principle of judgment.* Man is justified by faith, says the old Book. We are measured and tested by ambition and intention and desire rather than by achievement. We are judged by the direction in which our faces are turned and our steps are tending. This is what really tests men; this is what separates them into sheep and goats; this is what sets them on the left and the right, whether they are looking up or down, whether their faces are set towards the summit or the base. A soldier falls in battle; it is how he lies which tells whether he fell as a hero or a coward. If the wounds are all in front, if he falls with his face to the foe—then he proclaims himself a hero. If his wounds are in the back, and if he falls with his face to the

rear—then he proclaims himself a coward, he fell in the act of flight. And it is so in the moral world. It is the direction in which we look that decides our character. That is why so much stress is laid in the Bible upon the "look."

"Look unto Me and be ye saved," is the appeal. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills," is the response. "There is life for a look," is the comment made upon these things by a modern hymn-writer. And though it is quite possible falsely to interpret such a statement, properly understood it is profoundly true. We are saved by looking. For the direction in which our eyes look is the direction in which our feet travel. The man who "looks" unto God is a saved man. For that "look" means that he is a climber, a struggler, that his face is set towards the heights, that his affections are set on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Our look is a revelation of character. That is how God will judge us—whether our eyes are up or down, up toward the stars, or down to the slime and the beast. That is what will decide our destiny, whether, when we fall, we fall face towards the summit, or face towards the base.

Suppose this were the day of Judgment, which way should we be found looking? We are on the slope! Are we looking up or down? Are our faces turned towards the summit or the pit? For myself, I feel often I have been a poor climber. I realize I am not nearly so far up the hill as I ought to have been; but one thing I am resolved upon, and that is this: that at all costs I will keep my face to the heights! I want to fall, when my time comes, with my face up the hill. For, at any rate, I can say, "My desire is to the Lord." And of one thing I am

sure, and that is this: the men who try, who struggle, who climb cannot in the long run fail. They shall come at length with singing unto Zion and everlasting joy upon their heads.

We are all living on the slope! Are we facing up or down? "Turn ye, turn ye," said the prophet to his fellow-countrymen, "for why will ye die?" They were facing downwards, and downwards there was nothing but shame and death. Turn ye, I say to every one who has been looking down hitherto. Set your faces towards the summit. Breast the hill. Start climbing. You can slip and slide only into death. You must climb into life. Lift up your eyes on high. And if you are frightened of the ascent, if you feel the way too steep, I remind you of one who can help, who stretches out a hand to assist you over places otherwise too difficult and hard:

> "A wayfaring man with wounded hands
> Will carry you up the stair."

XXI

THE UPWARD CALL

"*The high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*"—PHILIPPIANS iii. 14.

IN my treatment of this little phrase which I have read out as my text, I want you to let me do two things. First, I am going to ask you to allow me to treat my text as a detached and separate phrase. Usually I am very averse from lifting a Scripture sentence out of its proper context, for the simple reason that, as a rule, the exact meaning of a verse can only be discovered as it is studied in its proper setting. But that is scarcely true of the little phrase I have read as my text. It carries its meaning on the face of it. And its meaning when looked at as a detached phrase is exactly the same as that which it bears when studied in the light of its context. So I am doing no violence to the meaning of the phrase in thus isolating it. And indeed a preacher is almost driven to this policy in self-defence. You all know the glowing passage from which my phrase is taken. It is one of the richest passages Paul's pen ever indited. If I began to enter upon the exegesis of the surrounding sentences I should never know where to end. I should never reach my text at all. For there is a sermon in almost every phrase. So in self-defence, and in your defence and to bring this sermon within reasonable limits, I am going to be deaf to the voices of the sentences that precede my text, and am going rigidly to confine myself to the words of the text itself.

The second thing I want to do is this—I want you to allow me to make a slight variation in the reading. I do not like needlessly to change the wording of some beautiful and familiar passage. That is the fault the Revisers committed. In the interests of accuracy as they thought—but which really was a mistaken and pedantic accuracy—they altered certain beautiful and rhythmic passages though the alteration did nothing to improve the sense. They acted like certain musical editors do, who wantonly alter familiar harmonies without improving them. But the slight alteration I wish to suggest does really make a difference, and does, as I believe, more nearly reproduce the Apostle's thought. Instead of "high" calling, I propose to read, as in the R.V. margin, "upward" calling. This is my text then, "the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Paul's Own Call.

And that is the first thing I want you to notice. I want you to notice how Paul describes the call of God in Christ. He describes it as an "upward call." That is a most significant epithet coming as it does from the Apostle. The "call of God in Christ" was always in Paul's mind associated with a definite historical event. It was always associated with the mighty experience that befell him on the way to Damascus. He goes back to that notable day whenever he has to rehearse his own spiritual history. It was then it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. It was then he came face to face with Jesus. It was then he was "called" to faith and apostleship. And, looking back upon that day and that call, the Apostle speaks of it as an "upward" call. Now, I repeat, that

is a most significant, not to say startling, epithet to apply to his "call" when you think of what it issued in. When the "call" came to the Apostle, he was a notable man amongst his people. He was the "rising hope" of the Pharisaic party. He had a great reputation for piety and zeal. He had also gifts of leadership which made him, even though still young, one of the most trusted emissaries of the Jewish authorities. When the "call" came to Paul, he had the world at his feet. Rosy prospects of wealth, and power and fame spread themselves out before him. And what did the "call" do for him? It stripped him of wealth and fame and power. It dashed every worldly prospect. It made him outcast amongst his own kith and kin; it made him anathema amongst his own countrymen. The man who once enjoyed deference and respect was treated as the filth and off-scouring of the world. The man who once sat in judgment upon others was himself dragged before one court after another and went from stoning to stoning, and scourging to scourging and imprisonment to imprisonment. The "call" brought him to a life of loneliness and weariness, of poverty and pain, of outlawry and contempt. This very letter bears ample traces of the hardnesses in which the "call" landed him. Listen to sentences like these, "I know how to be abased. I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want." "For whom I suffered the loss of all things." That was what the "call" had meant for Paul—abasement, hunger, physical want, the loss of everything the world counts dear. And at the very moment at which he wrote this letter—loss of liberty, for he wrote it from his Roman imprisonment. That is what the "call" had entailed upon Paul, and yet looking back upon it, he speaks of

it as an "upward" calling. The world remembered what he had been, and its verdict was that Paul had gone "down" and indeed gone "out"; Paul's own glad and triumphant confession is that, beggared, outcast, prisoner though he was he had "gone up." His "call" day had been his promotion day. "The gifts and calling of God," he writes in his Epistle to the Romans, "are without repentance." That is just an expression of his own experience. He had never regretted the "call." He had never repented of his own obedience to it. It was the great day in Paul's life. He rejoiced and exulted in the remembrance of it. It is true it stripped him bare of worldly honours and dignities; but it had brought him blessings that made the things he had lost seem but dung. For it had given him Christ, and along with Christ, it had given him the forgiveness of sins, peace of heart, the smile of God, the hope of glory. The blessings it brought, more than compensated for the earthly goods it took away. It made him a pariah amongst men; but it gave him the spirit of sonship by which he could cry Abba, Father! And Paul could say with George Macdonald—

> "Better a child in God's great house,
> Than the king of all the earth."

Paul, rejoicing in his redemption, in his reconciliation with God, in his sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality, knew that the calling of God in Christ Jesus was an "upward calling."

The "calling" is always and is still an "upward" calling. God's "call" to the man who listens to it always means not loss but gain; not abasement but exaltation. I am not forgetting that the "call" to us as to Paul may mean immediate loss and sacrifice. Our Lord Himself told us that we may have to cut off

a limb or to pluck out an eye. But the surgery is in order to life. And, after all, life is a greater thing than a limb. The loss is in order to secure a greater gain. "I am come that they may have life and may have it in abundance." I am quite ready to believe that the "call" may mean the surrender of some indulgence, the sacrifice of some pleasure—but what is that loss compared to the gain of the peace of God? I am quite ready to believe that the "call" may mean the loss of worldly popularity. Society looks askance at the man who has really obeyed the "call." It calls him a fanatic and gives him the cold shoulder. You remember what the Pharisees did to the man born blind when he confessed Christ—they cast him out. And you remember what happened to him afterwards—the Lord Himself came and befriended him. To be cast out of human society is nothing—if we know we are received into the home and family of God. The call of God is always an "upward" calling. He calls us to loftier levels, larger blessings, nobler privileges, fairer hopes. There are other things that call to us—that call loudly and insistently to us. Has there not been a novel published comparatively recently called the *Call of the Blood?* Well, there is a "call of the blood" with which we are all familiar—a call of the insurgent lusts and passions which make their abode in this human nature of ours. And there is the loud and clamant "call of the world," the appeal of Vanity Fair, the glamour and fascination of the pleasures of the far country. But these are "downward" callings. Their end is destruction. They leave men bankrupt in faith and hope. They bring men down to the horrible pit and the miry clay. There are men who in the rage and bitterness of their spirits curse the day they ever listened to those calls. But "the gifts and

calling of God are without repentance." No one ever regrets listening to this call. It is an "upward" calling. It is a call to release and strength and joy and eternal life.

A Call to Progress.

But the "calling," in Paul's view of it, was not confined to that great initial "call" on the way to Damascus. The "call" came to him every day. Every day Christ Jesus was God's summons to him. And every day it was an "upward calling." In Christ, he was always being summoned to loftier heights of character and achievement. An "upward calling"! Paul never felt he could rest and be thankful. Look at what he says in these very verses, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on. . . . Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus." He had been responding to the call for years; he had risen to glorious heights of character and service—but behind every peak of attainment there was a loftier peak still. He had not yet attained. The call bid him not sit nor stand, but go. It was not simply a "high calling," it was always and ever an "upward calling."

And here comes in the advantage of the change in reading which I have adopted. A "high calling" suggests a definite task which may be accomplished, and a definite mark which may be reached. Conceivably, a man might fulfil and achieve a "high calling." But God's calling in Christ is an "upward"

calling. It is never achieved. The man who has risen highest knows there are unscaled heights still towering above him. And so the Christian life is perpetual growth and progress.

"No end to learning," says Browning in his "Grammarian's Funeral." And there is "no end to growing" for the man who makes Christ his ideal and aim. For Christ puts the best of men to shame. When our gaze is horizontal—when we look out at the men and women by whom we are surrounded, we find it easy enough to become self-satisfied. But when our gaze is vertical—when we look at Christ—our content vanishes. We realize then how infinitely we fall short of God's plan and purpose for us. Christ will not let us rest. He summons us continually to loftier heights. God's calling in Christ is an "upward calling."

This is one of the great glories of our Christian faith—it makes room for infinite expansion and advance, and so it keeps men for ever alive. For we really live only as we grow. We live only as we aspire and press on. A man's reach must exceed his grasp. When we cease to grow, we cease to live and only vegetate. When we settle on our lees, we cease to live, we only exist. That is one way in which Christ gives life and gives it in abundance; He makes provision for endless progress. Some men when they set out in life, do so with small, limited, strictly compassable ambitions. It was Sir David Wilkie, was it not, who made it his ambition "to live respectable, and die respected"? That is a better ambition than some! But what an ambition for a man with an immortal soul! Now little, limited, compassable ambitions of this kind may be achieved; but the result will be little, limited, compassable men. You can measure them,

you can sum them up. And there is something wrong with man when he is limited and measurable. There ought to be about every man a touch, a suggestion of the illimitable, the infinite and the eternal. Now we get that suggestion of the illimitable when we make Christ our aim. There is no end to growing. There is endless room for advance. We never attain. We are always "pressing forward." God's calling in Christ is always an "upward" calling.

The motto of my old college is, "Arduus ad solem" "Up to the sun"—that is how it is with the Christian man. The low levels of worldly success do not satisfy him. To live respectable and die respected does not content him. He has had a vision of the Lord. His ambition, his daily aspiration is that he may be conformed to the image of God's Son. That ambition does not allow him to rest. God's calling in Christ is an "upward" calling. Life is limitless, boundless, infinite. There is unceasing enrichment, enlargement, expansion. It is a case of "upward still to purer heights, onward still to scenes more blest." "Up towards the sun."

That is the truth set forth in slightly different form by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He exhorts us to run with patience the race that is set before us "looking unto Jesus." That is the condition of running with patience, of keeping running with dogged persistence—looking unto Jesus. If we look simply at the men and women by whom we are surrounded, we shall certainly stop running; we may feel that we have reached the goal. But if we "look unto Jesus," we shall not dream of standing still. We shall see we are still infinitely short of the goal. We shall run till we drop and die if we "look unto Jesus." And so we shall be making progress and

climbing higher in character and achievement right to the end. And I repeat that is life. "For," as Browning puts it—

> "What is life for, save, in growth
> Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
> From the gift looking to the giver,
> And from the cistern to the river,
> And from the finite to infinity
> And from man's dust to God's Divinity."

That is it. We shall be growing up unto Him who is the head in all things, even Christ. God's calling in Christ is always an "upward calling."

A Call to Holiness.

Let me illustrate the "upwardness" of God's call in Christ in two or three directions. First of all, it is an "upward" call in the matter of *personal holiness*. The call of God in Christ makes the best of men feel he is not good enough. Some people are fond of debating and discussing the doctrine of Christian perfection. I have a strong belief that for our soul's health we had better leave this doctrine alone. I confess to having a deep and ineradicable suspicion of "perfect" people. When people profess to be perfect they only show themselves to be very imperfect Christians. As a matter of fact, when people come into the presence of Christ, it is their faults and shortcomings and sins they become conscious of. It is the difference between Christ and themselves they realize. "Not that I have already attained or am already perfect," cries Paul. And here is the late Cardinal Vaughan writing thus in his diary on his fiftieth birthday. "I am fifty years old. It is said that no man becomes a saint after fifty. But by

prayer even this miracle can be performed and a dry, hard, stupid old stick like me may reach sanctity through Him that strengtheneth me. What a grace to have a time for penitence. I am determined to use the remaining time better than the last, God helping." Cardinal Vaughan had the Roman Catholic conception of sainthood no doubt, but he was a real and devoted Christian, and you see the feeling that beats through his words—a feeling of compunction and shame. He was filled with dissatisfaction with his own attainments in holiness. God's call to him in Christ was an "upward" call. And so it is to every one of us. There is something wrong with us if we are not daily growing in grace. No Christian man dare be satisfied with himself till he is like Christ. And he is never like Christ in this life. But every day he ought to become more like Him Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. God's calling in Christ is an "upward" calling in the matter of holiness.

The Call to Love.

And God's call in Christ is an "upward" call *in the matter of love*. No man is really a Christian with whom love is not the ruling principle. You remember how bluntly John puts it, "Every one that loveth is born of God," but "he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." Love is the sign and proof of the Divine life in the soul. Love must have displaced self as the ruling principle if we are to be Christians at all. But the most loving of us is not loving enough. For Christ's love is the pattern and standard. And Christ's love was an uttermost love that revealed itself in an uttermost sacrifice. "Have this mind in you

which was also in Christ Jesus," says Paul in the preceding chapter. And what kind of a "mind" was that? It was a "mind" of uttermost sacrificial love. "Who being in the form of God . . . took upon Him the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death even the death of the Cross." That was the way in which Christ loved. He loved men so well that to serve them and to save them He died. And that is the standard of love to which we have to conform. Christ confronts us with the nail-prints in His hands and feet. "I bore all this for thee," He says, "what hast thou done for Me?" And that mighty love rebukes us for the selfishness of our own lives and brings the prayer to our lips, "More love, O Christ, to thee, More love to Thee." God's calling in Christ in the matter of sacrificial love is an "upward calling."

The Call to Serve.

And God's call in Christ in the matter of *service* is an "upward" calling. Love implies service. When we have the love of God in our souls we shall be eager to do His will. When we have the love of Christ in our hearts we shall be willing to spend and be spent that He may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. When we have the love of men in our soul, we shall be willing to "burn ourselves out" in the effort to redeem them. Love involves service. The love of Christ, Paul said, "constraineth me."

Every Christian—as one who loves his Lord—is bound to be a servant, a seeker, a toiler, a worker. There can be no such thing as a Christian "at ease." But the most devoted servant, the most eager and devoted toiler, cannot flatter himself that he has done enough. Christ is the standard of service. And of

Christ I read things like this, "The zeal of God's house hath eaten me up." "He had no leisure so much as to eat." He came "not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." Christ's life of service puts our poor, half-hearted service utterly to shame. The best of men have felt themselves to be unprofitable servants when compared to Christ. Christ, the great Servant, has summoned them to ever deeper devotion, more consecrated labour, more sacrificial toil. "More sufferings, Lord; More sufferings, Lord," cried that devoted missionary Francis Xavier. He felt he had not done enough. God's call in Christ in the matter of service is always an "upward" calling.

The Upward Call to Heaven.

And I finish by saying this. All through life, I have been saying, God's call in Christ is an "upward" call. And so life keeps full and rich and deep because it means growth, and progress and expansion to the finish. And when life comes to an end and death summons us, God's call to us in Christ, even when death is the messenger, is still an "upward" call. How the consciousness of the "upward" call throbs through the pages of the New Testament. "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better"—the "upward" call. "If the earthly home of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"—the "upward" call. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness"—the "upward" call.

We are apt to regard death as impoverishment. So it is, if we have made our portion in this life. So it

is, if we have listened to the voices of folly and of sin. "The wages of sin is death." But to the Christian death comes with an "upward" call. The Salvationists do well to put on the tombstone of a departed colleague the word "promoted." That is exactly what death is to the Christian man. In it, God calls and says, "Friend, come up higher," and we go to sit down in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus. "I am going," said William Blake the painter, "to that land which I have all my life longed to see." God's calling in Christ—not only all through life but even in death is an "upward" calling.

The "upward" call of God in Christ! Have you heard it? Have you listened to it? These other "calls" we hear—the call of the flesh and of the world—are "downward" callings. They are syren calls and they lead to destruction and death. But the calling of God in Christ is an "upward" calling. It issues in a fuller, deeper life. It leads to loftier heights of character and attainment, and at last it sets us without blemish before the throne, kings and priests unto our God and Father.

XXII

THE PERILS OF THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

"O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years,
In the midst of the years make it known."
HABAKKUK iii. 2.

THERE are various critical questions connected with this chapter upon which I have not the slightest intention of entering. A good many scholars deny that this beautiful lyric was written by Habakkuk at all. They say that it is post-exilic, while Habakkuk is supposed to have lived and prophesied at a time when the kingdom of Judah was still standing. I do not feel called upon to decide this purely literary question, nor indeed am I competent to do so. What I am concerned about is not the personality of the writer, so much as the circumstances under which the song was written; and even with the circumstances under which the song was written I am only concerned just so far as they throw light upon the meaning of the song itself. What these circumstances were, the song makes sufficiently plain. The Jewish people were passing through a time of distress and fear. Their very existence was in danger.

If Habakkuk was the real author of this psalm, the danger at which it hints would be sufficiently accounted for by the menace of the mighty Chaldean power looming on the Northern horizon. Judah was obviously threatened by Nebuchadnezzar and his

hosts, and in itself it was powerless to resist. In his anxiety and fear the prophet offers this prayer to God. He called to mind how God in the old days had intervened at the Red Sea to save the Hebrews from what looked like certain destruction; he called to mind also the promises and prophecies of psalmists and seers that in the latter days there should arise for Israel a great Deliverer and mighty Redeemer. And he beseeches God who had accomplished such mighty deliverances in the past, and who had promised to accomplish a mightier one still in the future, not to forget them in the intervening time. He begs Him "in the midst" of this long period of years to interpose speedily on His people's behalf. "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known."

Now, having said so much about the circumstances under which the Psalm was written, and having in the process explained the primary meaning of my text, I want to leave Habakkuk and Judah entirely out of account, and I want to give another and quite different application to this phrase—"in the midst of the years." I am going to apply it not to the middle time of a nation's history, nor yet to the middle time of the Church's history; I am going to apply it to the middle time of the individual life. I am going to treat my text as a prayer which those in the middle passage of life may well offer for themselves: "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known."

In a word, I am going to preach a sermon to the middle-aged. I have a notion that as far as special sermons are concerned they are a much neglected class. Ministers are continually preaching sermons to the young. I am quite conscious when I write my

Sunday-evening sermons, for instance, that I have always special regard to the young men and women who will form so large an element in the congregation. Every Sunday most of us take care to speak a few words to the children. Sometimes we try to speak words of comfort and good hope to the old. But sermons to the "middle-aged" are few and far between. I do not think I have ever addressed myself specifically and distinctly to them before. And yet they form the largest element in our congregations. I am not going to define exactly what "middle-age" means, and I know it is dangerous and delicate work to speculate as to the ages of a mixed company, but probably I shall not be far wrong if I say that most of us in this church are in that "middle-passage" somewhere.

And not only do the "middle-aged" form the bulk of our congregations, but the "middle-aged," I am quite sure of it, have the hardest battle to fight. Of all the people who need sympathy and prayer, the people in the "middle-passage" need it most. Of course I realize that every age has its own difficulties and temptations and dangers. Youth has its perils: I am not going to make light of them. They arise mainly on the side of the physical appetites and passions. Youthful lusts have it in their power to lay waste the soul. And old age has its perils—the perils of stagnation and despair; old age is apt to live in the past and to be pessimistic as to what the future will bring. And middle life has its own dread perils too. There is no step of our way that is unattended by danger. From first to finish we are in the midst of foes. That is the truth which Tennyson teaches in his story of Gareth and Lynette. Before he could accomplish his adventure and win his rank

as knight, Gareth had four fierce enemies to face. The first was the Knight of the Morning Star, and the second was the Knight of the Noonday Sun, the third was the Knight of the Evening Star, and the last was Death. Which is only the poet's way of saying—the allegory is plain for all to see—that Youth, Manhood, and Old Age all bring with them their peculiar perils and give us hard battles to fight. There is, as the Psalmist put it long before Tennyson, "an arrow that flieth by day, a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and a destruction that wasteth at noonday."

But I am persuaded that of all the perils we have to pass through in life, those of our middle-age are the most insidious and deadly. Possibly the dangers that beset youth are the more obvious and dramatic, and that is very likely why preachers are so constantly preaching special sermons to the young. The dangers that beset the middle-aged are more secret and subtle, and not so manifestly shameful, but they are none the less fatal to the soul, and they are all the more perilous because they work so secretly and so insidiously. Our most deadly foe is not the Knight of the Morning Star, but the Knight of the Noonday Sun. It is "in the midst of the years" that our souls are in most imminent danger and it is then we need to pray most earnestly that God will revive His work and make Himself known to us.

I happened to come across in my reading the other day a brief account of the discovery of the North-West Passage. The North-West Passage is, as you know, the passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific, through the Arctic Ocean, across the north of North America. It was first made in 1850; but before the discoverer of 1850 pushed his way through, many had tried and failed. The North-West Passage is a dangerous

passage. Many a ship has been crushed and broken by the ice, and many a sailor has found a grave in the Arctic waters or among the Arctic snows in the attempt to make the Passage.

And the story of the North-West Passage reminded me of the middle passage of life. On the other side is the Pacific of perfect rest and peace with God, but the middle passage is a dangerous passage and many a man has made shipwreck. Have you noticed this in reading your New Testament, that the sin our Lord appeared to fear the most was the sin of avarice? It has been often remarked that Christ did not fear sins of passion half so much as He did the love of gain. Now avarice is not a sin of youth but of middle life. It was the "middle passage" Christ feared the most. Have you noticed that whenever and wherever Christ preached the publicans and sinners crowded to listen to Him? Now the "publicans and sinners" were the notoriously vicious people of Palestine, the people who had soiled their fair fame by sensual sin, the people who had given the rein to the hot passions and lusts of youth. They crowded around Christ because He had such abounding hope for them. But the people of whom even Christ almost despaired were the Pharisees—respectable enough people in the eyes of society, but conventional, formal, self-satisfied. Now self-satisfaction, formalism, conventionality, hypocrisy, they are not faults of youth, but of middle life, of life when it "settles on its lees." The perils Christ feared the most were the perils of the "middle passage."

Have you noticed further in reading your New Testament that the ghastliest failures, of which we get any record there, were the failures of men in middle life? If I chose to go back to the Old Testament I

could illustrate what I am saying by the tragic stories of Samson and Saul and Solomon, all of whom made shipwreck in the middle passage. But let me confine myself to two illustrations taken from the New Testament. I take first the case of Judas. Judas apparently had come through the perils of youth unscathed. He had, as men say, no stain upon his character; but somehow and somewhen he allowed the love of money and the love of power to enter into his heart. And when he saw that his Lord would gratify neither of them, when he saw his discipleship was going to bring him neither wealth nor great place, he committed the crime of history, and sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. It was a tragic shipwreck Judas made of his life. He went to pieces in "the middle passage."

And the same thing may be said of Demas. Demas was no longer a young man; he had been for some years a fellow labourer with the Apostle Paul. He had come off victor over the Knight of the Morning Star, but he collapsed before the attack of the Knight of the Noonday Sun. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." He succumbed to the perils of "the middle passage." Altogether I repeat once again there is no period of life so full of danger to the soul as the middle period, and there is no stage of life at which we need to pray more fervently that God will revive His work within us and make Himself known to us than when we find ourselves "in the midst of the years."

I have been saying that middle life is a time of peril, now let me go on to ask wherein the peril consists. What are the special dangers of the middle passage? I begin with this—

The Loss of Idealism.

Youth is a time when we dream dreams and see visions. Youth is a time when we build the most gorgeous castles in the air and cherish the most splendid ambitions. "Wait till I'm a man," J. M. Barrie as a small boy used to say to his mother, "and you shall lie on feathers." As a mere boy he dreamed of conquering the world and winning comfort for her he loved the best. But it is not every man that succeeds as Barrie did. Most of us find the conquest of the world a harder thing than we thought. The ideals we cherished prove hard of realization. And so it comes about that by the time we have reached the midst of our years many of us have given up our dreams. We abandon our quests; we surrender our ideals; we "thicken on our lees."

If I may refer once again to Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," the story of Sir Gawain illustrates this very point. Like the other knights of King Arthur's court, Sir Gawain had set out in search of the Holy Grail, which is only another way of saying that he started with the ideal of a pure and holy Christian life. But he soon wearied of the quest, and finding a silk pavilion in a field with merry maidens in it, he abandoned the quest, and spent his twelve months and a day in sensuous ease and pleasure. And on his return to King Arthur's court, he scoffs at the very idea of the quest. It is madness, he says,

> "But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,
> I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
> And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
> To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
> Henceforward."

Gawain is a picture of the man who starts with high ideals, but who in process of time surrenders

them and lives a merely sensuous life. And that is the special peril of middle-age! The glamour, the romance, the aspiration go out of life. The truth of what I am saying is plain to see in the lives of the men and women about us—possibly in our own. There is no touch of vision or idealism about them. The Pegasus of youth has become a cab-horse by middle-age. "He was born a man and died a grocer" is the bitter and biting epitaph written on a gravestone in a Paris churchyard.

And the same tragic deterioration has taken place in many of us. We began by being men—with outlook and vision and broad horizons, and we have ended by being grocers, drapers, lawyers, mechanics. We started by resolving we were going to live and now we are content with making a living. People may talk of this as worldly wisdom, but it is really the death of the soul. We live by admiration, faith and love. When we surrender our ideals and laugh at our dreams and say it is not worth while, we are committing spiritual suicide. And that is a constant peril of the middle period. We cease to aspire and hope. We sink into a groove, and the groove quite easily becomes a grave. Life becomes drab, commonplace, earthly. We lose soul. We make shipwreck in the "middle passage."

Loss of Faith.

And another peril of the middle period is that of loss of faith born of the disillusionments and disappointments of which life is full. Childhood is a happy time, because it is such a trustful time. The child has a sort of instinctive faith in the goodness of everybody. He looks at every one through the beautiful

spectacles of his own guileless and innocent soul. And old age again, while not so innocently trustful as childhood, usually becomes mellow and gentle in judgment. Taught by experience, the old judge leniently and speak kindly. Knowing all, they are almost ready to forgive all. But in between childhood and old age comes the middle period, full of disappointment and disillusionment, when men are apt to become hard and cynical and scornful to the ruin of their soul.

For it must be admitted that life is full of disappointment and disillusionment. The youth, carefully guarded in his country home, scarcely knows what life is or what human nature is. But he finds it out when he is cast on his own resources, and the finding out not unusually embitters a man for life. He finds, for instance, that men are not always honourable and true. He finds business life full of all sorts of crooked ways. He finds men, whom he regarded as his friends, are not above tricking him and overreaching him. That was at the root of Hamlet's savage scorn : he found his mother and his uncle had both been false to his father. Trust had been repaid by treachery. And life is full of that sort of thing. And it shatters faith in human nature. It makes men bitter, cynical, scornful. Any and every man is in parlous plight when he "sits in the seat of the scornful." And so many middle-aged people sit in that perilous seat. I hear them sometimes give utterance to their savage and sweeping judgments. They say in their haste, like the Psalmist, that all men are liars. They declare there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

You can see this cynical and scornful temper reproduced in the literature of our day. It is the disillu-

sioned, middle-aged view of the world that modern literature takes. To read a modern novel you might imagine that every man was a scoundrel and every woman either base or soiled. You might imagine there were no happy marriages or peaceful homes, but that every husband and every wife had been unfaithful to each other, or were plotting and planning to be so. It is a bitter, blear-eyed, faithless view to take. And, at bottom, it is as false as it is faithless. It is the cynicism of the disillusioned. It is the peculiar peril of middle life. Cynicism always argues loss of faith. And when a man has lost faith in his fellows he is well on the way to losing faith in God. And when faith is lost and honour dies the man is dead. He has made shipwreck in the "middle passage."

Loss of the Eternal.

And another peril of middle life is this—the loss of the sense of the eternal. There are things incident to the middle period of life that tend to make us lay up treasure on earth and forget all about the treasure in heaven. I do not think this peril is nearly so menacing in childhood or in age. In childhood the spiritual and eternal seems strangely near. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," says Wordsworth. The child finds no difficulty in being a "pilgrim in the infinite." Heaven, God, the white-robed angels are wonderfully real and near to the child.

And when old age comes, once again eternal things become vivid and clear. Mr. Gladstone, as those of you will remember who have read his life, was extremely anxious to have what he called a "break between Parliament and the grave." Engrossed as he was in public affairs he was not able to give the time

he wished to give to meditation and prayer and preparation for eternity. That was one of the reasons he gave for his retirement in 1874. But it was not for another twenty years that the break he desired really came. But for a space of four years the old man was able to give himself to recollection and prayer in preparation for the great change. But even if a man never gets a definite "break" as Mr. Gladstone did, there are plenty of things as he gets old to remind him of the approach of the eternal world. He finds, for instance, that he has to "slow down" and "slacken off." His powers are not what once they were; and the mere decay of strength reminds him that this is not his rest.

And then, further, as a man lives to get old, he finds that one by one his friends and acquaintances are removed from his side. As he follows one after the other to the grave, he finds it increasingly difficult to forget eternity, and as one after the other of his friends passes into it, the eternal world becomes more real and homelike than the present one. No! the danger of forgetting the unseen and eternal is the special and peculiar peril of the middle period. As we get on to middle-age responsibilities accumulate, and the time of leisure becomes less and less. We become so engrossed and absorbed in the demands of business that we have scarcely time to think of anything else. And this is specially true in these days of fierce competition, when the pace of life is so fast and the strain so tremendous. "Scarcely can we turn aside for one brief hour of prayer." The necessary demands of business seem to monopolize all our time. We never seem to have a moment to lift our eyes up unto the hills. And our souls suffer in consequence. For the soul can no more live without fellowship with

God than the body can live without food. I say, the mere pressure of life brings this peril with it—the peril of materializing life and starving the soul.

But that is not all. This urgent, insistent world tends not only to engross our time, it tends also to absorb our souls. In the fierce struggle for bread-and-butter we begin to think that bread-and-butter is the only thing worth having. Immersed in the world as we are, we begin to think the world's prizes are the only prizes worth winning. We lay all the stress upon "goods." We pay no heed to the eternal riches. All we care about is the treasure upon earth. That is the great peril of middle life—materialism. Mammon usurps the place of God. "The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes"—those are the perils of youth. The "vainglory of life," the pomp and pride of life, the love of wealth and station—that is the peril of middle-age. It was by a sure instinct that John Bunyan set Vanity Fair about mid-way in Christian's journey. It is in the middle passage we feel the tug and the pull of the world's fascination.

And I repeat what I said a little earlier in my sermon—that the corroding materialism of middle-age is more deadly to the soul than the hot passions of youth. It is more deadly, because its peril is not recognized and no shame is attached to it. Sins of passion Society has agreed to brand as shameful, and that very brand of shame attached to them acts as a warning against them. But love of the world, absorption in the pursuit of its wealth and power is reckoned no disgrace. It rather counts to a man's credit, and therein lies its deadlier menace. For the love of money, greed, worldliness can destroy the soul just as surely as drunkenness or vice. I know—we all know—many a man who has grown rich, and in the

process lost his soul. They gained the world and lost heaven. They have filled their storehouses and sacrificed the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled. It is a ruinous bargain. For what shall it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul? It is the special danger of middle-age. In the world, we are always in peril of becoming of it. Like Judas and Demas, it is fatally easy to make shipwreck in the "middle passage."

That is why this prayer of Habakkuk's is one those of us who are in the middle period need perpetually to offer: "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known." God alone, a vivid sense of God, can deliver us from stagnation and cynicism and love of the world. That is why those of us who are in the very midst of life's responsibilities, who feel the pressure of its crowding cares, who are plunged into the very vortex of its business, need to snatch at every opportunity of bringing ourselves face to face with God. Where there is no vision the people perish. Unless God reveals Himself to us we shall slip away into sloth and stagnation and spiritual death. If only God hold us up then our steps will not slide but we shall be safe. If only we make the most High our habitation we need not be afraid of the arrow that flieth by day nor of the pestilence that walketh in darkness, *nor of the destruction that wasteth at noonday.* If only God is felt and known by us, we shall make this terrible middle passage in safety and reach the Pacific of God's rest on the other side. We need God always, at every stage, at every turn. But there is no time when we need Him more than in this middle period. "Revive Thy work, O God, in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known."

XXIII

THE MINISTRY OF MEMORY

"*Do ye not remember?*"—MARK viii. 18.

OUR Lord asked the question with a suggestion of surprise and even reproach in His tone. You remember the circumstances. Jesus and the disciples were in the little boat crossing toward Capernaum after that mighty and amazing miracle when, with seven small loaves and a few small fishes, He fed and satisfied four thousand men. The last thing that had happened before they had embarked was this: the Pharisees had come to Jesus seeking of Him a sign from heaven. The crowds who had shared in the miraculous meal were ready to salute Jesus as the Messiah upon the spot. But the Pharisees—who posed as the religious leaders of the people—professed to be doubtful as to the means by which Jesus accomplished His mighty works. They pretended to believe that signs on earth could be wrought by evil spirits as well as by good. But heaven was God's own abode. In the heavenly sphere God and God alone had authority, and therefore a sign from heaven would be proof positive that the One who gave it really possessed the Divine sanction and power. And they demanded that Jesus should give them a sign of that kind. The feeding of the four thousand was a sign on earth. Its authorship was doubtful. Beelzebub might have had a hand in it. Let Jesus give them a sign from heaven that they might see and believe.

And Jesus had refused to give them the sign they asked for. Christ was not in the habit of compelling and constraining any one's belief. He did enough to warrant and justify faith for the man of open and candid mind, and He left it there. People upon whom the miracle of the feeding of four thousand men with seven loaves and a few small fishes had made no impression, people upon whom such a stupendous deed had been thrown away were not open to conviction. They had their hearts hardened.

But the thought of their stubborn unbelief and prejudice burdened and oppressed Him. Our Lord would fain have saved these Pharisees had they been willing to be saved. His heart yearned over them as, indeed, it did over every human being, great or small. It cut Him that they were so obstinately opposed to Him, that they deliberately closed their eyes to the light. He could not get the remembrance of it out of His mind. It haunted Him. And in the course of the voyage He turned to His disciples and warned them against that prejudiced and unbelieving spirit which was shutting the Pharisees out of the kingdom. "Take heed," He said, "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." One would have thought the meaning of the warning was sufficiently plain. But the disciples were slow-witted men; they had a perfect genius for misunderstanding their Master's most obvious remark. They took that word "leaven" in its literal meaning and decided that their Lord's rebuke had something to do with bread. And when they remembered that they had only brought one loaf with them, they concluded that was what Jesus was referring to,—He was rebuking them, they argued, because they had forgotten to take bread.

And it was when He perceived the direction in

which the disciples' thoughts were running and the interpretation they put on His remark, that our Lord uttered the words of my text. The disciples' conclusion that He was talking about bread caused Him a double wonder. First, a wonder that they did not understand. "Do ye not yet perceive," He said, "neither understand? Have ye your hearts hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not?" Our Lord was surprised that after all their months of fellowship with Him, the thoughts of the disciples still moved in the sphere of the material and the physical, and seemed incapable of rising into the sphere of the spiritual and the eternal. And secondly, a wonder that they could for a moment get into a panic about bread. That very day they had seen their Master with seven loaves feed four thousand men. A few weeks before that, they had seen Him with five loaves feed five thousand men. In their Master they had One who had illimitable resources at His command. He had shown by those two mighty deeds that He had but to open His hand and men were filled with good. And yet here were His disciples, within a few hours of one of these great revelations of their Lord's power, worrying their heads because they had only got one loaf, getting into a wild panic about a possible shortage of supplies. "Do ye not yet remember?" said Jesus to them. Had they forgotten so soon the lesson of the feast just over? If they had only remembered, they would have been delivered at once from all trepidations and fears. If they had only remembered, they would have known that so long as they had Christ it really made no difference whether they had one loaf or a hundred. If they had only remembered, they would have known that because they had Christ they had all things and abounded.

Their fears were all born of forgetfulness; to banish their fears and bring back confidence and courage again, all that was needed was to "remember."

And now I want to go on to say that there is a permanent lesson in all this for us. There is a gracious ministry of memory which we ought to cultivate. We are not free in these days from difficulties and troubles and discouragements. But when we fall into trepidations and fears, it is all because we forget. I imagine that our Lord as He contemplates our panics and alarms must often say of us—with as much surprise and reproach as in the case of these first disciples—"Do ye not remember?" Remembrance is the great antidote to fear. There is in the exercise of memory a cure for all our timidities and despairs. And it is about this encouraging, hope-inspiring ministry of memory that I want to speak with you for a few minutes further.

Memory as Judgment.

Of course I am not forgetting that there is a stern and austere side to the ministry of memory. I believe memory is the faculty of judgment. The "books" which are opened at the final account, and out of which we are judged, are the books of memory. Memory is the recording angel who sets down all the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad. And we shall be judged by what memory sets down, by what memory contains. And who is to say what it contains? We talk about "forgetting." I wonder whether we ever really forget anything. We talk about "bad memories," memories that fail to retain facts, names, faces, events. I

question very much whether it is the memory that is bad; what is really defective is our faculty of picking out quickly the various things that memory keeps in store. Some men's minds are like a desk, nicely pigeon-holed, with every paper in its proper place; and other men's minds are like a desk with the papers piled together higgledy-piggledy in most admired disorder. Each desk contains all the papers its owner requires, but in the one case he can lay his hand on the paper he wants in an instant; in the other he searches and searches, but though he knows it is there he cannot lay his hands on it. What I mean to suggest is this: that the difference between us is not so much in *memory* as in the power of *recollection*. It is not that some people's memories hold less than others, but that some people are quicker than others at picking out of memory's vast store the particular thing they want to present to their consciousness. As a matter of fact, I question whether memory ever forgets anything. Philosophers in these days talk about the subliminal consciousness. There is a whole range of mental activity of which we are not vividly and definitely conscious. The brain is busy hoarding up impressions and ideas without our knowing it. And there is, in much the same way, a "subliminal memory," that is to say, memory keeps many things of which we are not aware. You remember those poignant lines which Tennyson puts into the lips of Sir Percivale?—

> "Then every evil word I had spoken once,
> And every evil thought I had thought of old;
> And every evil deed I ever did,
> Awoke and cried, 'This quest is not for thee.'"

Every evil word, every evil thought, every evil deed —they awoke! Percivale had clean forgotten all about

them. He never dreamed they were there. But memory had them in its keeping all the time, and in that hour of crisis they awoke—they came vividly back to consciousness. And I believe that is a true account of memory. It is a kind of sensitive plate. Everything records itself on its tablets. Of some of the things that are there we are vividly conscious. And when they are evil things, we wish we could forget, for an accusing memory is the "worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched." But there are also multitudes of things there that we do not consciously and actively remember. Everything is there. All our thoughts and words and deeds and experiences are there, and at the great day of Judgment "the books will be opened," and we shall give account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be bad.

Memory as Inspiration.

But there is also a gracious and kindly side to the ministry of memory. If from the one point of view it is a minister of judgment, from another it is a minister of encouragement and inspiration, and it is this gracious side of memory's ministry that my text suggests. We recognize this inspirational power of memory in our daily life. For instance, we observe certain anniversaries. This year we are commemorating the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Great Ejectment. We are recalling the story of those two thousand clergymen of the Established Church of their time who, out of loyalty to Christ and their own consciences, gave up their livings, left their parsonages, and went out to face poverty, persecution,

loneliness and want. And why do we remember them? Why do we not let the dead past bury its dead? Because there is inspiration in remembrance—because we cannot recall these brave men who counted the reproach of Christ greater treasure than the riches of Egypt without having courage and loyalty kindled in our souls. And we visit certain shrines. When we pay our first visit to London, one of the places we inevitably visit is Westminster Abbey. We wander through that greatest of all Christian temples, in which all that is mortal of so many of England's noblest and best lies buried. We read the inscriptions on their tombstones and, somehow or other, by mere contact through memory with the great and good of other days, our hearts are fired, our spirits purged, our lives touched to finer issues. One of the places an English Congregationalist visiting America for the first time is taken to see is sure to be Plymouth Rock. And it is an unforgettable experience. I can remember the sort of thrill that passed through me as I stepped upon the Rock upon which those pilgrims of faith landed nearly three hundred years ago, and still more when I stood on Burial Hill and read the names of some of those brave men who, like Abraham, left home and kindred and went out, not knowing whither they went, for their faith. I think I was a better and stronger man myself for the experience. There is profit, there is stimulus, there is inspiration in remembrance.

But the remembrance that is most charged with inspirational and victorious power is the *remembrance of God*. We get depressed and discouraged because we forget. We should be always rejoicing, if we only always remembered. Do you remember that sequence in one of the Psalms? "My soul shall be

satisfied as with marrow and fatness," says the Psalmist, "and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips, when I remember Thee upon my bed and meditate on Thee in the night watches." Set side by side with that verse of the Psalmist that familiar stanza from Isaac Watts' hymn—

> "True 'tis a strait and thorny road,
> And mortal spirits tire and faint;
> But they forget the mighty God,
> Who feeds the strength of every saint."

"They forget," and the result is, they "tire and faint." But when they remember, their soul is satisfied, and they praise God with joyful lips. Both sequences are absolutely true to life. We languish and tire and are full of fears when we forget; but fears are changed to hopes, and Misereres to Hallelujahs, and we become a praising and rejoicing people when we remember.

Memory and the Perils of the Way.

To possess a brave and cheerful heart amid the manifold perils of the way, that is what we need to do—to *remember!* Do you remember the story that is told about the passing of Jordan in the Book of Joshua? Out of the very midst of the bed of Jordan, twelve men (one from each tribe) were to take twelve boulders and erect them into a cairn on the other side of Jordan, on the site of the first encampment of the children of Israel in the Promised Land. And the object of the erection of that cairn was that future generations might be reminded of God's wonderful care of Israel and how He brought them through Jordan dry-shod. Joshua knew that the children of

Israel were not at the end of their difficulties; he knew that possibly times might come when they might find themselves confronted by insuperable obstacles. But that cairn would remind them of God, and kindle within them the hope that as He brought their fathers safely through their troubles and perplexities, so also He would bring them. It was a perpetual reminder of the God Who led them by the right way to the city which hath the foundations.

Life's journey still brings us into dark and perilous places. We find ourselves surrounded by troubles and difficulties. We begin to wonder whether God has not made a mistake. We begin to wonder sometimes whether there is a good God at the heart of things, watching over our steps and our lying down and acquainted with all our ways. We grow fretful and querulous and bitter. And when we are in that mood, I fancy our Lord says to us, as He did to these disciples, "Do ye not remember?" That is all we need to banish our fears and distresses: just to remember. "Remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee," was Moses' counsel to the children of Israel. If they remembered, all anxiety would disappear. For if they looked back on the way already traversed, they would see that all along God had been leading them; they would see all along the track evidences of His love and saving power. And that is what we need to do when the way is steep and the path is rough, and we are half inclined to doubt the goodness of God: to remember. Let Memory engage in her gracious ministry. Recall God's dealings with you! Remember how unfailingly He has provided for you! Notice how things you feared as evil turned out to be rich in blessing! Notice how that valley of Baca you dreaded so much turned out to be a place of

springs! Notice how, again and again, afflictions have turned out to be benedictions, and the way you shrank from has turned out to be the best way! Remember! To remember is to say "good-bye" to anxiety and fear. For as you look back and remember you can see how unfailingly wise and kind God has been. It looked a hard and cruel thing for Jesus to stay where He was for two days on the other side of Jordan, when the Bethany sisters had sent such an urgent appeal to Him. I daresay they thought and perhaps spoke bitterly when their brother died, knowing, as they did, that a word from Him would have saved him. But when they received Lazarus back again from the tomb, they knew the Lord's love had not failed. He had only denied the lesser boon to give a greater. And I imagine in every dark day that overtook them in later years the Bethany sisters would "remember" that mighty happening and say to their souls, "All's well." "In perfect wisdom, perfect love, He orders for the best." Remember! Our lives are strewn with proofs of God's love and care. To remember them is the cure for fear.

"His love in times past
Forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink."

Memory and the Reality of God.

And that is what we need in order to cheer our souls and stablish our faith in days when doubts of the reality of God and of our own salvation assail us—to *remember*. Our religious life is not always at full tide. It ebbs and flows. Sometimes our religious life is like a Highland stream in flood, and sometimes it

is like a watercourse in summer, with the merest trickle of water in it.

> "Where is the blessedness I knew
> When first I saw the Lord?
> Where is the soul-refreshing view
> Of Jesus and His word?"

cries the poet Cowper.

It was ebb-tide with that poor harassed and troubled soul. And it is ebb-tide sometimes with us. We get out of touch with God; we begin to doubt our own salvation. I have just been reading the letters of Dr. John Brown, the author of *Rab and his Friends*. They are pathetic letters in many respects, especially the later ones. John Brown was one of the best and holiest men who ever doctored men's bodies or wrote books for the edification of their souls. And yet he spent many of his days in the shadow—doubtful of himself, doubtful almost of God. And we all of us probably know something of the feeling. But when we allow these doubts to shadow and oppress us, I fancy Christ must often say with surprise and a suggestion of reproach, "Do ye not remember?" The cure for all our doubts and fears is in remembrance. Call back your great experiences. If God seems far off at the moment, you have had times when He was the nearest Reality in all the world to you. You doubt your Christian standing to-day, but you have had your times when you *felt* God's love encircling you. Well, call those times back to remembrance! God is real, you have yourself come face to face with Him. His love is real, you yourself have felt it, and God does not change. Remember!—and the remembrance will scatter doubt. Paul was continually "remembering." He was for ever harking back to

the great event outside Damascus. Doubts as to God, as to His own calling—if they ever assailed him—vanished in the light of that remembrance. "My dear children," wrote Bunyan to his people, "call to mind the former days, and years of ancient times. Have you never a Hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the Close, the Milk-house, the Stable, the Barn, and the like, when God did first visit your souls? Remember also the word upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope. If you are down in despair; if you think God fights against you, or if heaven is hid from your eyes—remember!" That is the cure. Go back upon your own experiences! God touched you! Love filled you! Remember!

> "Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
> Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny;
> Yea, with one voice, O World, though thou deniest,
> Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

Memory and Times of Reaction.

And once again, to be of good courage in our Christian work and service in days of stagnation and reaction, that is what we need—to *remember*. I have often fancied that Christ our Master must wonder at our depressions and despairs. Perhaps that is what He is saying to the Church in these days—"Do ye not remember?" For though difficulties do crowd in upon us, if we remembered we should be delivered from all panic and fear. The practice of remembrance is the best thing the Christian Church could address herself to in these rather dull and disappointing days. It would do her good to remember *her own history*. The progress of Christianity has

not been uninterrupted and continuous. There have been ebbs and flows; advances and retreats, ups and downs, progress and reaction. Its history would be represented not so much by a straight line, but by the fluctuating line of the temperature record of a fever patient. Again and again the Church has seemed to be at the point of death; again and again her enemies have boasted themselves over her. They did so in the days of Diocletian and Galerius—when the Emperors proudly added to their other titles that of "Destroyer of the Christian Superstition." They did so, in the Middle Ages, when vice and scepticism were rampant amongst the clergy, and the masses of the people were sunk in ignorance and credulity. They did so in the eighteenth century in England here, when the upper classes scoffed religion out of court, and the lower classes were given up to drunkenness and brutishness. Things looked bad for the Christian Church in those days. But within less than twenty years of the great persecution, there was a Christian Emperor on the Roman throne; when things were at their worst in the Middle Ages, God had Luther ready to make religion more real and potent than it had been since Apostolic times; when things had touched bottom in England God raised up Wesley and Whitefield to quicken the Church and show that it could still wield resistless power. When men have tried to persuade themselves that the Christian faith was dead and buried, a mighty Resurrection has usually been close at hand! Remember, therefore, and be of good courage, and wait calmly for the dawning of the better day.

And, above everything else, the Church needs to *remember God.* "Do ye not remember?" said Jesus to those disciples, worrying about their one loaf.

"Remember," He meant, not simply what happened in the case of the five thousand and the four thousand, but "remember" that He was with them, and that in Him they had limitless resources at their command. And that is what He says to His depressed and discouraged Church to-day, "Do ye not remember—ME?" That is the cause of all our timidities and fears, we forget our Lord! I do not pretend to say that the tasks confronting us are not formidable. I do not pretend to say that the foes who face us are not fierce—they are! But we shall not be afraid of them if we remember GOD. That was how the people of Israel were to cheer and hearten themselves when the odds seemed to be against them in their warfare against the inhabitants of Canaan. "If thou say in thine heart, these nations are more than I, how can I dispossess them? thou shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh and unto all Egypt." That was how Nehemiah strengthened the hearts of his little band of exiles in face of the enemies who beset them round about. "Be ye not afraid of them," he said, "remember the Lord Who is great and terrible." "Remember the Lord"—that is the watchword for the Church to-day—the Lord who accomplished such mighty deliverances in days past, and Whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save, and Who is in the midst of His Church to-day. We shall be afraid of nothing: we shall drop all our whimperings and complaints; we shall go to our work with brave and cheerful hearts, conquering and to conquer, if only we remember that God is our Rock, and the Most High is our Redeemer.

There are two Psalms in the Psalter which bear this curious title, "A Psalm to bring to remembrance." That is the kind of Psalm we need as Churches and as

individuals. We need to sing some Psalm of remembrance of God's unfailing love and kindness to us as individuals; we need to sing some Psalm of remembrance of His marvellous works which He has done for His Church. All fears and doubts would vanish before remembrance. We doubt and fear only because we forget. Let memory fulfil her gracious work. "How is it that ye have not faith? Do ye not remember?"

2-4-23 Detroit

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